

Johnson

THE MAKING OF ENGLAND



THE
MAKING OF ENGLAND

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WITH MAPS

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PREFACE

The present work is only a partial realization of an old-standing project of mine, for it is now some ten or twelve years since I made collections for, and actually began a history of England up to the Norman Conquest. This work, however, was interrupted by the preparation of my *Short History*, and has since been further delayed by my revision and expansion of that book; and now that my hands are free the state of my health forbids my carrying out this earlier plan in its full extent. I have thought it better, therefore, to gather up and complete what I could of the history of the earlier times up to the union of England under Ecgberht, and this the more because these years form a distinct period in our national history whose interest and importance has I think still to be fully recognized. They form in fact the period of the Making of England, the age during which our fathers conquered and settled over the soil of

Britain, and in which their political and social life took the form which it still retains. The centuries of administrative organization which stretch from Egberht to Edward the First, the age of full national development which extends from Edward's day to our own, only become intelligible to us when we have fully grasped this age of national formation. I cannot but feel, therefore, that it is no slight misfortune that such a period should remain comparatively unknown, and that its struggles, which were in reality the birth-throes of our national life, should be still to most Englishmen, as they were to Milton, mere battles of kites and of crows.

Whether I have succeeded in setting these struggles in a truer and a more interesting light, my readers must decide. The remoteness of the events, the comparative paucity of historical materials, no doubt make such an undertaking at the best a hazardous one; and one of the wisest of my friends, who is at the same time the greatest living authority on our early history, warned me at the outset against the attempt to construct a living portraiture of times which so many previous historians, themselves men of learning and ability, had left dead. Nothing but my own vivid interest in the subject could have encouraged me in spite

of such a warning to attempt to convey its interest to others. In doing so, however, I have largely availed myself of some resources which have been hitherto, I think, unduly neglected. Archæological researches on the sites of villas and towns, or along the line of road or dyke, often furnish us with evidence even more trustworthy than that of written chronicle ; while the ground itself, where we can read the information it affords, is, whether in the account of the Conquest or in that of the Settlement of Britain, the fullest and the most certain of documents. Physical geography has still its part to play in the written record of that human history to which it gives so much of its shape and form ; and in the present work I have striven, however imperfectly, to avail myself of its aid. Even Bæda has supplied me with new material. Freely as he has been used for the ecclesiastical and political history of his time, the social information which lies scattered up and down his work has been left comparatively untouched. Bæda was no Gregory of Tours ; the seclusion of his life, and his relation to the race whose history he drew, precluded him from giving us such a picture of our forefathers as the bishop-statesman of Tours was enabled by his position and the difference of his Roman blood to give of

the Frankish conquerors of Gaul. But, in spite of this, Bæda incidentally tells us much, and a careful gleaning of these incidental facts gives us at any rate glimpses into the social life of England in the seventh and eighth centuries which can hardly fail to make the time more real to us.

The maps, in which I have endeavoured for the first time to trace the boundaries of the various English powers at different epochs, will no doubt be found in some respects susceptible of correction. The grounds on which the main lines of division are drawn I have stated in my book ;—what I wish to explain here is, that in some of the minor details of these maps I have been driven by the absence of information to rely on what seemed to me the probabilities of things, or the natural conclusion to be drawn from other facts of the time. This is especially the case in the boundary line between the English and the Britons. The battle of Deorham brought the conquerors to the Severn, while in Wulfhere's day they had reached the western border of Herefordshire ; but there is nothing to tell us by what steps during the century that elapsed they had advanced from the one point to the other. Under these circumstances I could only represent them in the maps that touched on the intervening period as advancing gradually from

the Severn to the Wye. We are in the same utter darkness as to the advance of the English over the upper valley of the Severn. At the end of the sixth century, their March or borderland only reached to the line of water-parting which forms the eastern boundary of that vale, and we hear nothing of their advance over it till almost the close of the eighth century, when the conquests of Offa carry their frontier to Offa's Dyke on the west of Shropshire. Here, however, the map itself helps us. Cheshire had become English at the beginning of the seventh century, while Herefordshire was English by the middle of it, and a glance at the map will show how inevitably these two facts imply a corresponding advance of the intervening frontier, as I have drawn it, to the course of the Severn. In the same way we have hardly anything to throw light on the advance of the West-Saxons across Dorsetshire. All we know is, that it could not have begun till about the middle of the sixth century, and that it was certainly completed by the beginning of the eighth. Difficulties of another kind presented themselves in accurately defining the political relations of one or two of the smaller states, such as Sussex or Essex, about which through long periods of time we have little or no information. Here I have been compelled to

assume that their political course during the years in which it is unknown to us was mainly the same as in the years in which it is known;—in other words, that when not known to be subject to any other power, Sussex owned the supremacy of the West-Saxons, and Essex followed the fortunes of East-Anglia.

I may add, in explanation of the reappearance of a few passages, relating principally to ecclesiastical matters, which my readers may have seen before, that where I had little or nothing to add or to change I have preferred to insert a passage from previous work, with the requisite corrections and references, to the affectation of rewriting such a passage for the mere sake of giving it an air of novelty.

JOHN RICHARD GREEN.

MENTONE, *November*, 1881.

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BRITAIN

before the

English Conquest.

Scale of Miles

British Names.....Deifyr, Icenl
Roman Names.....CUBRAE
Modern Names.....Dover
Forests.....
Marshes.....
Heath.....
Mountainous Country.....



THE MAKING OF ENGLAND

INTRODUCTION

BRITAIN AND ITS FOES

THE island of Britain was the latest of Rome's conquests in the west. Though it had been twice attacked by Julius Cæsar, his withdrawal and the inaction of the earlier Emperors promised it a continued freedom; but a hundred years after Cæsar's landing, Claudius undertook its conquest, and so swiftly was the work carried out by his generals and those of his successor that before thirty years were over the bulk of the country had passed beneath the Roman sway.¹ The island was thus fortunate in the moment of its conquest.

INTROD.

The Roman
Conquest.

¹ In these few introductory pages I need scarcely say that I do not attempt to write a history of Roman Britain. Such a history, indeed, can hardly be attempted with any profit till the scattered records of researches amongst the roads, villas, tombs, etc., of this period have been in some way brought together and made accessible. What I attempt is simply to note those special features of the Roman rule which have left their impress on our after history.

INTROD.

Britain
and its
Foes.

It was spared the pillage and exactions which ruined the provinces of Rome under the Republic, while it felt little of the evils which still clung to their administration under the earlier Empire. The age in which its organization was actively carried out was the age of the Antonines, when the provinces became objects of special care on the part of the central government,¹ and when the effects of its administration were aided by peace without and a profound tranquillity within. The absence of all record of the change indicates the quietness and ease with which Britain was transformed into a Roman province. A census and a land-survey must have formed here, as elsewhere, indispensable preliminaries for the exaction of the poll-tax and the land-tax which were the main burdens of Rome's fiscal system. Within the province the population would, in accordance with her invariable policy, be disarmed; while a force of three legions was stationed, partly in the north to guard against the unconquered Britons, and partly in the west to watch over the tribes which still remained half subdued. Though the towns were left in some measure to their own self-government, the bulk of the island seems to have

¹ Capitolinus says of Antoninus Pius: "With such diligence did he rule the subject peoples that he cared for all men and all things as his own. All the provinces flourished under him." Hadrian's solicitude was shown by his ceaseless wanderings over the whole Empire, and by the general system of border fortifications of which his Wall in Britain formed a part.

been ruled by military and financial administrators, whose powers were practically unlimited. But rough as their rule may have been, it secured peace and good order ; and peace and good order were all that was needed to ensure material development. This development soon made itself felt. Commerce sprang up in the ports of Britain. Its harvests became so abundant that it was able at need to supply the necessities of Gaul. Tin mines were worked in Cornwall, lead mines in Somerset and Northumberland, and iron mines in the Forest of Dean. The villas and homesteads which, as the spade of our archaeologists proves, lay scattered over the whole face of the country, show the general prosperity of the island.

The extension of its road system, and the up-growth of its towns, tell above all how rapidly Britain was incorporated into the general body of the Empire. - The beacon-fire which blazed on the cliffs of Dover to guide the vessels from the Gaulish shores to the port of Richborough proclaimed the union of Britain with the mainland ; while the route which crossed the downs of Kent from Richborough to the Thames linked the roads that radiated from London over the surface of the island with the general network of communications along which flowed the social and political life of the Roman world. When the Emperor Hadrian traversed these roads at the opening of the second century, a crowd of towns had already risen along

INTROD.

 Britain
and its
Foes.

 Roman
Towns.

their course.¹ In the south-east Durovernum, the later Canterbury, connected Richborough with London. In the south-west Venta or Winchester formed the centre of the Gwent, or open downs of our Hampshire; while gouty provincials found their way to the hot springs of Bath, and Exeter looked out from its rise over the Exe on the wild moorlands of the Cornish peninsula. Colchester and Norwich stand on the sites of Roman cities which gathered to them the new life of the eastern coast; and Lindum has left its name to the Lincolnshire which was formed in later days around its ruins. Names as familiar meet us if we turn to central Britain. The uplands of the Cotswolds were already crowned with the predecessor of our Cirencester, as those of Hertfordshire were crowned by that of our St. Alban's; while Leicester represents as early a centre of municipal life in the basin of the Trent. Even on the skirts of the province life and industry sheltered themselves under the Roman arms. A chain of lesser places studded the road from York to the savage regions of the north, where the eagles of a legion protected

¹ The bulk of these towns undoubtedly occupied British sites, and were probably only modifications of communities which had already taken a municipal shape in the interval of rapid native development between the landing of Caesar and the landing of Claudius. But these, after all, can have been little more than collections of huts, like the Gaulish communities which had risen under like circumstances, and the difference between such a community and the meanest Roman town was even materially immense.

the settlers who were spreading to the Forth and the Clyde. Caerleon sprang from the quarters of another legion which held down the stubborn freedom that lingered among the mountains of Wales, and guarded the towns which were rising at Gloucester and Wroxeter in the valley of the Severn; while Chester owes its existence to the station of a third on the Dee, whose work was to bridle the tribes of North Wales and of Cumbria.¹

INTROD.

Britain
and its
Foes.

It is easy, however, to exaggerate the civilization of Britain. Even within the province south of the Firths the evidence of inscriptions² shows that large tracts of country lay practically outside the Roman life. Though no district was richer or more peopled than the south-west, our Devonshire and our Cornwall seem to have remained almost wholly Celtic. Wales was never really Romanized; its tribes were held in check by the legionaries at Chester and Caerleon, but as late as the beginning of the third century they called for repression from the Emperor Severus as much as

Imperfect
civilization
of Britain.

¹ It is in the age of the Antonines that we first get a detailed knowledge of Britain in the geographical survey of Ptolemy, which gives us the towns of the native tribes (*Monum. Hist. Brit.* pp. x.-xvi.); and in the account of its roads and towns given in the Antonine Itinerary (*Ibid.* xx.-xxii.). A few mile-stones survive, and the names of Hadrian and Antoninus Pius which they bear fix the general date of this road-making.

² See Hübner, "*Inscriptiones Britanniae Latinae*" (forming the seventh volume of the "*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*," published at Berlin, 1873), a book which must furnish the groundwork of any history of Roman Britain.

INTROD.

Britain
and its
Foes.

the Picts.¹ The valleys of the Thames and of the Severn were fairly inhabited, but there are fewer proofs of Roman settlement in the valley of the Trent; and though the southern part of Yorkshire was rich and populous, Northern Britain as a whole was little touched by the new civilization. And even in the south this civilization can have had but little depth or vitality. Large and important as were some of its towns, hardly any inscriptions have been found to tell of the presence of a vigorous municipal life. Unlike its neighbour Gaul, Britain contributed nothing to the intellectual riches of the Empire; and not one of the poets or rhetoricians of the time is of British origin. Even moral movements found little foothold in the island. When Christianity became the religion of the Empire under the house of Constantine, Britain must have become nominally Christian; and the presence of British bishops at ecclesiastical councils is enough to prove that its Christianity was organized in the ordinary form.² But as yet no Christian inscription or ornament has been found in any remains of earlier date than the close of the Roman rule; and the undoubted existence of churches at places such as Canterbury,

¹ There are very few inscriptions of Roman date from Devon and Cornwall; none from Wales.

² Stubbs and Haddan ("Councils of Great Britain," i. 1-40) have collected the few facts which form the meagre evidence for the existence of Christianity in Britain. Even of this meagre list some are doubted by so competent an observer as Mr. Raine ("Historians of the Church of York," Introd. p. xx. note).

or London, or St. Alban's, only gives greater weight to the fact that no trace of such buildings has been found in the sites of other cities which have been laid open by archaeological research.

Far indeed as was Britain from the centre of the Empire, had the Roman energy wielded its full force in the island it would have Romanized Britain as completely as it Romanized the bulk of Gaul. But there was little in the province to urge Rome to such an effort. It was not only the most distant of all her western provinces, but it had little natural wealth, and it was vexed by a ceaseless border warfare with the unconquered Britons, the Picts, or Caledonians, beyond the northern Firths. There was little in its material resources to tempt men to that immigration from the older provinces of the Empire which was the main agent in civilizing a new conquest. On the contrary, the harshness of a climate that knew neither olive nor vine deterred men of the south from such a settlement. The care with which every villa is furnished with its elaborate system of hot-air flues shows that the climate of Britain was as intolerable to the Roman provincial as that of India, in spite of punkahs and verandahs, is to the English civilian or the English planter. The result was that the province remained a mere military department of the Empire. The importance of its towns was determined by military considerations. In the

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earliest age of the occupation, when the conquerors aimed at a hold on the districts near to Gaul, Colchester, Verulam, and London were the greatest of British towns. As the tide of war rolled away to the north and west, Chester and Caerleon rivalled their greatness, and York became the capital of the province. It is a significant fact that the bulk of the monuments which have been found in Britain relate to military life. Its inscriptions and tombs are mostly those of soldiers. Its mightiest work was the great Wall and line of legionary stations which guarded the province from the Picts. Its only historic records, are records of border forays against the barbarians. If we strive to realize its character from the few facts that we possess, we are forced to look on Britain as a Roman Algeria.

Physical
aspect of
Britain.

It was not merely its distance from the seat of rule or the later date of its conquest that hindered the province from passing completely into the general body of the Empire. Its physical and its social circumstances offered yet greater obstacles to any effectual civilization. Marvellous as was the rapid transformation of Britain in the hands of its conquerors, and greatly as its outer aspect came to differ from that of the island in which Claudius landed, it was far from being in this respect the land of later days. In spite of its roads, its towns, and its mining-works, it remained, even at the close of the Roman rule, an "isle of

blowing woodland," a wild and half-reclaimed country, the bulk of whose surface was occupied by forest and waste. The rich and lower soil of the river valleys, indeed, which is now the favourite home of agriculture, had in the earliest times been densely covered with primæval scrub; and the only open spaces were those whose nature fitted them less for the growth of trees, the chalk downs and oolitic uplands that stretched in long lines across the face of Britain from the Channel to the Northern Sea. In the earliest traces of our history these districts became the seats of a population and a tillage which have long fled from them as the gradual clearing away of the woodland drew men to the richer soil. Such a transfer of population seems faintly to have begun even before the coming of the Romans; and the roads which they drove through the heart of the country, the waste caused by their mines, the ever-widening circle of cultivation round their towns, must have quickened this social change. But even after four hundred years of their occupation the change was far from having been completely brought about. It is mainly in the natural clearings of the uplands that the population concentrated itself at the close of the Roman rule, and it is over these districts that the ruins of the villas or country houses of the Roman landowners are most thickly scattered.

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Such spaces were found above all at the ex- The Downs.

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tremities of the great chalk ranges which give form and character to the scenery of southern Britain. Half-way along our southern coast the huge block of upland which we know as Salisbury plain and the Marlborough downs rises in gentle undulations from the alluvial flat of the New Forest to the lines of escarpment which overlook the vale of Pewsey and the upper basin of the Thames. From the eastern side of this upland three ranges of heights run athwart southern Britain to the north-east and the east, the first passing from the Wiltshire downs by the Chilterns to the uplands of East-Anglia, while the second and third diverge to form the north downs of Surrey or the south downs of Sussex. At the extremities of these lines of heights the upland broadens out into spaces which were seized on from the earliest times for human settlement. The downs of our Hampshire formed a "Gwent" or open clearing, whose name still lingers in its "Gwentceaster" or Winchester; while the upland which became the later home of the North-folk and South-folk formed another and a broader "Gwent" which gave its name to the Gwenta of the Iceni, the predecessor of our Norwich. The North Downs as they neared the sea widened out in their turn into a third upland that still preserves its name of the Caint or Kent, and whose broad front ran from the cliffs of Thanet to those of Dover and Folkestone. Free spaces of the

same character were found on the Cotswolds or on the Wolds of Lincoln and York ; and in all we find traces of early culture and of the presence of a population which has passed away as tillage was drawn to richer soils.

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The transfer of culture and population, indeed, had begun before the conquest of Claudius ;¹ and the position of many Roman towns shows how busily it was carried on through the centuries of Roman rule. But even at the close of this rule the clearings along the river valleys were still mere strips of culture which threaded their way through a mighty waste. To realize the Britain of the Roman age we must set before us the Poland or Northern Russia of our own ; a country into whose tracts of forest-land man is still hewing his way, and where the clearings round town or village hardly break the reaches of silent moorlands or as silent fens. The wolf roamed over the long "desert" that stretched from the Cheviots to the Peak. Beavers built in the streams of marshy hollows such as that which reached from Beverley to Ravenspur.² The wild bull wandered through forest after forest from Ettrick to Hampstead.³ Though the Roman engineers won fields from

The Waste
and Fen.

¹ Raine, "Historians of the Church of York," *Introd.* pp. ix. x.

² Boyd Dawkins, "Cave-Hunting," pp. 76, 132.

³ Even in the twelfth century the forest district north of London was full of wild boars and wild oxen, "*latebræ . . . aprorum et taurorum sylvestrium.*"—FitzStephen's *Life of Becket* ; in Giles, "*St. Thom. Cant.*" i. 173.

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Romney marsh on the Kentish coast, nothing broke the solitude of the peat-bogs which stretched up the Parrett into the heart of Somersetshire, of the swamp which struck into the heart of the island along the lower Trent, or of the mightier fen along the eastern coast, the Wash which then ran inland up the Witham all but to Lincoln, and up the Nen and the Cam as far as Huntingdon and Cambridge.¹

The
 Woodland.

But neither moor nor fen covered so vast a space of Britain as its woods.² The wedge of forest and scrub that filled the hollow between the North and South Downs stretched in an unbroken mass for a hundred and twenty miles, from Hampshire to the valley of the Medway; but, huge as it was, this "Andredsweald" was hardly greater than other of the woodlands which covered Britain. A line of thickets along the shore of the Southampton Water linked it with as large a forest-tract to the west, a fragment of which survives in our New Forest, but which then bent away through the present Dorsetshire and spread northward round the western edge of the Wiltshire downs to the valley of the Frome. The line of the Severn was blocked above Worcester by the forest of Wyre, which extended northward to

¹ Pearson, "Historical Maps of England," p. 3.

² See Guest, *Origines Celticae*, ii., "Early English Settlements in Britain," pp. 151-2. I shall deal more at large with these swamps and woodlands as we meet them in our story.

Cheshire; while the Avon skirted the border of a mighty woodland, of which Shakspeare's Arden became the dwindled representative, and which all but covered the area of the present Warwickshire. Away to the east the rises of Highgate and Hampstead formed the southern edge of a forest-tract that stretched without a break to the Wash, and thus almost touched the belt of woodland which ran athwart mid-Britain in the forests of Rockingham and Charnwood, and in the Brunewald of the Lincoln heights. The northern part of the province was yet wilder and more inaccessible than the part to the south; for while Sherwood and Needwood filled the space between the Peak and the Trent, the vale of York was pressed between the moorlands of Pickering and the waste or "desert" that stretched from the Peak of Derbyshire to the Roman wall; and beyond the wall to the Forth the country was little more than a vast wilderness of moorland and woodland which later times knew as the forest of Selkirk.

As we follow its invaders step by step across Britain, we shall see how wide these forests were, and what hindrances they threw in the way of its assailants. But they must have thrown almost as great hindrances in the way of its civilization. The cities of the province indeed were thoroughly Romanized. Within the walls of towns such as Lincoln or York, towns governed by their own municipal officers, guarded by massive walls, and

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linked together by the network of roads which reached from one end of the island to the other, law, language, political and social life, all were of Rome. But if the towns were thoroughly Romanized, it seems doubtful, from the few facts that remain to us, whether Roman civilization had made much impression on the bulk of the provincials, or whether the serf-like husbandmen whose cabins clustered round the luxurious villas of the provincial landowners, or the yet more servile miners of Northumbria and the Forest of Dean, were touched by the arts and knowledge of their masters. The use of the Roman language may be roughly taken as marking the progress of the Roman civilization ; and though Latin had all but wholly superseded the languages of the conquered peoples in Spain and Gaul, its use was probably limited in Britain to the townsfolk and to the wealthier proprietors without the towns. Over large tracts of country the rural Britons seem to have remained apart from their conquerors, not only speaking their own language, and owing some traditional allegiance to their native chiefs, but retaining their native system of law. Imperial edicts had long since extended Roman citizenship to every dweller within the Empire ; but the wilder provincials may have been suffered to retain in some measure their own usages, as the Zulu or the Maori is suffered to retain them, though subject in theory to British

law, and entitled to the full privileges of British subjects. The Welsh laws which we possess in a later shape are undoubtedly in the main the same system of early customs which Rome found existing among the Britons in the days of Claudius and Cæsar;¹ and the fact that they remained a living law when her legions withdrew proves their continuance throughout the four hundred years of her rule, as it proves the practical isolation from Roman life and Roman civilization of the native communities which preserved them.

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The dangers that sprang from such a severance between the two elements of its population must have been stirred into active life by the danger which threatened Britain from the north. No Roman ruler had succeeded in reducing the districts beyond the Firths; and the Britons who had been sheltered from the Roman sword by the fastnesses of the Highlands were strong enough from the opening of the second century to turn fiercely on their opponents. The wall which the Emperor Hadrian drew across the moors from Newcastle to Carlisle marks the first stage in a struggle with these Caledonians or Picts which lasted to the close of the Roman rule. But even without such a barrier the disciplined soldiers of the Empire could easily have held at bay enemies such as these, and when we find the Picts penetrating in the midst of the fourth century into the

Inroads of
the Picts.

¹ Sir H. Maine, "Early History of Institutions," p. 6.

heart of Britain, it can hardly have been without the aid of disaffection within the province itself. For such disaffection the same causes must have existed in Britain as we know to have existed in Gaul. The purely despotic system of the Roman government crushed all local vigour by crushing local independence: and here as elsewhere population was no doubt declining as the area of slave-culture widened with the sinking of the labourer into a serf. If the mines were worked by forced labour, they would have been a source of endless oppression; while town and country alike were drained by heavy taxation, and industry fettered by laws that turned every trade into an hereditary caste. But the disaffection which backed the Pictish invader found a firmer groundwork in Britain than in other imperial districts which suffered from the same misrule. Once within the province the Picts would meet kindred of their own, who though conquered were hardly more Romanized than themselves, and whom a jealousy of the Romanized townsfolk might easily rouse to arms. That such a division between its inhabitants broke the strength of Britain at a later time is nearly certain; that it had begun in the middle of the fourth century is probable from the character of the Pictish inroad which all but tore Britain from the Empire in the reign of Valentinian. The inroad was met by his general, Theodosius, and the Picts driven back to their mountains;

but Theodosius had found southern Britain itself in possession of the invaders.¹ Raids so extensive as this could hardly have been effected without aid from within; and the social condition of the island was such that help from within may have been largely given.

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The Picts however were far from being the only enemies who were drawn at this moment to the plunder of the province. While their clans surged against the Roman wall, the coasts of Britain were being harried by marauders from the sea. The boats of Irish pirates—or as they were then called, Scots—ravaged its western shores, while a yet more formidable race of free-booters pillaged from Portsmouth to the Wash. In their homeland between the Elbe and the Ems, as well as in a wide tract across the Ems to the Rhine, a number of German tribes had drawn together into the people of the Saxons, and it was to this people that the pirates of the Channel belonged.² Chance has preserved for us in a Sleswick peat-bog one of the war-keels of these early seamen. The boat is flat-bottomed, seventy feet long, and eight or nine feet wide, its sides of oak-boards fastened with bark-ropes and iron bolts. Fifty oars drove it over the waves with a freight of warriors whose arms, axes, swords, lances, and

The Saxons.

¹ Ammianus Marcellinus, lib. xxvii. cc. 8, 9. (Monum. Hist. Brit. p. lxxiii.)

² Their first recorded appearance off the coast of Gaul is in A.D. 287. Eutropius, ix. 21. (Monum. Hist. Brit. lxxii.)

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knives were found heaped together in its hold.¹ Like the galleys of the Middle Ages, such boats could only creep cautiously along from harbour to harbour in rough weather; but in smooth water their swiftness fitted them admirably for the piracy by which the men of these tribes were already making themselves dreaded. Its flat bottom enabled them to beach the vessel on any fitting coast; and a step on shore at once transformed the boatmen into a war-band.

Their piracy.

A letter which a Roman provincial, Sidonius Apollinaris, wrote in warning to a friend who had embarked as an officer in the Channel fleet, which was "looking out for the pirate-boats of the Saxons," gives us a glimpse of these freebooters as they appeared to the civilized world of the fifth century. "When² you see their rowers," says Sidonius, "you may make up your mind that every one of them is an arch pirate, with such wonderful unanimity do all of them at once command, obey, teach, and learn their business of brigandage. This is why I have to warn you to be more than ever on your guard in this warfare. Your foe is of all foes the fiercest.³ He attacks unexpectedly; if you expect him, he makes his escape; he despises those who seek to block his path; he overthrows those who are off their

¹ Lubbock, "Prehistoric Times," pp. 8, 9.

² Sidon. Apollin. Epist. viii. 6. (Migne, "Patrologia," vol. lviii. col. 597.)

³ "Hostis est omni hoste truculentior."

guard; he cuts off any enemy whom he follows; while, for himself, he never fails to escape when he is forced to fly. And more than this, to these men a shipwreck is a school of seamanship rather than a matter of dread. They know the dangers of the deep like men who are every day in contact with them. For since a storm throws those whom they wish to attack off their guard, while it hinders their own coming onset from being seen from afar, they gladly risk themselves in the midst of wrecks and sea-beaten rocks in the hope of making profit out of the very tempest.”¹

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The picture is one of men who were not merely greedy freebooters but finished seamen, and who had learned, “barbarians” as they were, how to command and how to obey in their school of war. But it was not the daring or the pillage of the Saxons that spread terror along the Channel so much as their cruelty. It was by this that the Roman provincials distinguished them² from the rest of the German races who were attacking the Empire; for while men noted in the Frank his want of faith, in the Alan his greed, in the Hun his shamelessness, in the Gepid an utter absence of

Their slave-
hunting.

¹ Cf. Sidon. Apollin. Carm. vii. (Monum. Hist. Brit. p. c.)

“Quin et Aremoricus piratam Saxona tractus
Sperabat, cui pelle salum sulcare Britannum
Ludus, et assuto glaucum mare findere lembo.”

² Salvian, de Gubernatione Dei, iv. 14. “Gens Saxonum fera est, Francorum infidelis, Gepidarum inhumana, Chunnorum impudica,” etc.

any trace of civilization, what they noted in the Saxon was his savage cruelty. It was this ruthlessness that made their descents on the coast of the Channel so terrible to the provincials. The main aim of these pirate-raids, as of the pirate-raids from the north, hundreds of years later, was man-hunting, the carrying off of men, women, and children, into slavery. But the slave-hunting of the Saxons had features of peculiar horror. "Before they raise anchor and set sail from the hostile continent for their own homeland, their wont when they are on the eve of returning is to slay by long and painful tortures one man in every ten of those they have taken, in compliance with a religious use which is even more lamentable than superstitious; and for this purpose to gather the whole crowd of doomed men together, and temper the injustice of their fate by the mock justice of casting lots for the victims. Though such a rite is not so much a sacrifice that cleanses as a sacrilege that defiles them, the doers of this deed of blood deem it a part of their religion rather to torture their captives than to take ransom for them."¹

¹ "Mos est remeaturis decimumquemque captorum (*caprorum Migne*) per æquales et cruciarias pœnas, plus ob hoc tristi quam superstitioso ritu, necare; superque collectam turbam periturorum, mortis iniquitatem sortis æquitate dispergere. Talibus eligunt votis, victimis solvunt; et per hujusmodi non tam sacrificia purgati quam sacrilegia polluti, religiosum putant cœdis infaustæ perpetratores de capite captivo magis exigere tormenta quam pretia."

I have ventured to base my version of this letter on a spirited though free translation given by Mr. Hodgkin in

From the close of the third century the raids of these Saxons had been felt along the coasts of Gaul, and a fleet which appears from this time in the Channel must have been manned to resist them. It is not however till the year 364¹ that we hear of them as joining in any attack upon Britain itself; but from this moment their ravages seem to have been ceaselessly carried on, and their presence off its shores became one among the pressing difficulties which the country had to meet. For the road between Britain and Rome lay across the Channel: and the occupation of the waters or coasts of the Channel by a pirate fleet was not only fatal to the trade of the province with the European mainland, but threatened its connection with the central government, and cut it off from the body of the Empire. It is to the years therefore that followed this joint attack of Saxon and Pict that we must look for the date of two measures which mark what we may term a change of front in the military administration of Britain. It was probably now that her greater towns strengthened themselves with walls, a change

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Foes.Saxons in
the Channel

"Italy and her Invaders," vol. ii. 365. The "*cruciarias pœnas*," which Mr. Hodgkin renders "*crucifixion*," are more probably something like the "*spread-eagle*" of the later Northmen.

¹ "Cum (Carausius) per tractum Belgicæ et Armoricæ pacandum mare accepisset quod Franci et Saxones infestabant." Eutrop. (Monum. Hist. Brit. p. lxxii.); Ammianus Marcellinus, lib. xxvi. c. 4. "Hoc tempore . . . Picti Saxonesque et Scoti et Attacotti Britannos ærumnis vexavere continuis." (Monum. Hist. Brit. p. lxxiii.)

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which implied dread of an attack from which the Roman troops might be unable to defend them; while the pressure of the Saxons, as well as the district on which it told, is marked by the organization of the coast from the Wash to Southampton Water under an officer who bore the title of "Count of the Maritime Tract," or "of the Saxon Shore."¹

The Saxon
Shore.

It was here that Britain lay most open to the pirates' forays. Unguarded by the cliffs and bleak moorlands that ran northward along the coast from the Humber to the Tweed, or by forests such as lined the shore from Portsmouth to the west, the tract which was known as the Saxon Shore presented along its whole line natural features that invited and favoured attack. Its sea-brim was fringed with marshy islands or low tracts of alluvial soil which offered secure points of landing or

¹ In the full description of his office and troops ("Notitia utriusque Imperii," Mon. Hist. Brit. xxiv.) the style of this officer is "Comes Limitis Saxonici per Britanniam." Elsewhere (Ibid. xxiii.) he is informally "Comes Littoris Saxonici per Britannias." The arguments of Lappenberg (Anglo-Saxon Kings, ed. 1881, i. 57, 58), Kemble (Saxons in England, i. pp. 10, 11, 14), and others for an earlier date for this shore, as well as for the derivation of the name from a Saxon settlement along it rather than its use as a barrier against Saxon descents, though still maintained by Mr. Skene (Celtic Scotland, vol. i. p. 151), have been satisfactorily refuted by Dr. Guest (Origines Celticae, ii. 154 *et seq.*), whose judgment is adopted by Mr. Freeman (Norm. Conq. i. 11, note), and by Professor Stubbs (Constit. Hist. i. 67, note). The "Notitia Imperii," in which alone the term is found, was drawn up about A.D. 400; possibly in 403. (Hodgson Hinde, Hist. of Northumberland, i. part 1, pp. 18, 19.)

anchorage, and broken by large estuaries whose waters gave access to the country behind them; while from these lower parts the land rose within into downs and uplands which were at once easy to overrun and favourable for settlement. But the measures of defence which were now taken more than compensated for the natural weakness of the island in this quarter. The coast was lined with strong fortresses.¹ At Brancaster in Norfolk the northernmost of these watched the inlet of the Wash and guarded the East-Anglian downs. In our Suffolk a stronghold now known as Burgh Castle blocked the estuary of the Yare, as the walls of Colchester barred the inlet of the Stour. Othona, a fortress at the mouth of the Blackwater, protected the southern flats of our Essex; while London forbade all passage up the Thames. Kent was the most vital point of all, for through it passed the line of communication between Britain and Rome; and a group of fortresses, admirably disposed, protected this passage. One guarded Richborough, which was the common port for all traffic from Gaul; a second at Reculver held the entrance of the sea-channel which then parted Thanet from the mainland, and through which vessels passed to London by the estuary of the

¹ The list is given in the "Notitia Imperii" (Mon. Hist. Brit. xxiv.), with the disposition of the troops in each fortress. London, and the towns at Canterbury and Rochester, though backing this line of defence, were not subject to the Count of the Saxon Shore.

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Thames; while walled towns on the sites of our Canterbury and of our Rochester protected the points at which the road from Richborough to London passed the Stour and the Medway.¹ Three other fortresses held the coast of the Channel as far as the great woods which hindered all landing to the west. Lymne guarded the lowlands of Kent and the reclaimed tracts of Romney Marsh; Anderida, the modern Pevensey, held our Sussex; while Porchester marks the site of a castle which looked over the Southampton Water, and blocked the road to the Downs.

Withdrawal
of Romans
from
Britain.

Garrisoned as they were by a force of at least ten thousand men, the legion placed at the command of the Count of the Saxon Shore, these fortresses were too strong a barrier for the pirates to break; and we may set aside the theories which, in ignorance of the military strength of the Empire and of its hold over the provinces, suppose them to have conquered and settled here for centuries before the close of the Roman rule. Up to the moment indeed when the Imperial troops quitted Britain, we see them able easily to repel the attacks of its barbarous assailants. When a renewal of their inroads left Britain weak and exhausted at the accession of the Emperor Honorius, the Roman general Stilicho renewed

¹ The "Notitia" stations troops at Dover: but it is doubtful whether there was any Roman fortress there. Clark, "Dover Castle," *Archæol. Journ.* vol. xxxii. p. 440.

the triumphs which Theodosius had won.¹ The Pict was driven back afresh, the Saxon boats chased by his galleys as far as the Orkneys, and the Saxon Shore probably strengthened with fresh fortresses. But the campaign of Stilicho was the last triumph of the Empire in its western waters. The struggle Rome had waged so long drew in fact to its end; at the opening of the fifth century her resistance suddenly broke down; and the savage mass of barbarism with which she had battled broke in upon the Empire at a time when its force was sapped by internal decay. In its western dominions, where the German peoples were its foes, the triumph of its enemies was complete. The Franks conquered and colonized Gaul. The West-Goths conquered and colonized Spain. The Vandals founded a kingdom in Africa. The Burgundians encamped in the borderland between Italy and the Rhone. The East-Goths ruled at last in Italy itself. And now that the fated hour was come, the Saxons too closed upon their prey. The condition of the province invited their attack, for the strength of the Empire, broken everywhere by military revolts, was nowhere more broken than in Britain, where the two legions which remained quartered

¹ Claudian, *De tert. Consul. Honorii*, ap. *Mon. Hist. Brit.* p. xeviii.

“*Maduerunt Saxone fuso
Orcades; incaluit Pictorum sanguine Thule;
Scotorum cumulos flevit glacialis Ierne.*”

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at Richborough and York set up more than once their chiefs as Emperors, and followed them across the Channel in a march upon Rome. The last of these pretenders, Constantine, crossed over to Gaul in 407 with the bulk of the soldiers quartered in Britain, and the province seems to have been left to its own defence ; for it was no longer the legionaries, but "the people of Britain," who, "taking up arms," repulsed a new onset of the Barbarians. As the Empire was organized, such a rising in arms was a defiance of its laws and a practical overthrow of the whole system of government ; and it was naturally followed by the expulsion of Constantine's officials and the creation of a civil administration on the part of the provincials. Independent however as they found themselves, they had no wish to break away from Rome. Their rising had been against a usurper : and they appealed to Honorius to accept their obedience and replace the troops. But the legions of the Empire were needed to guard Rome itself : and in 410 a letter of the Emperor bade Britain provide for its own government and its own defence.¹

The British
Defence.

Few statements are more false than those which picture the British provincials as cowards, or their struggle against the barbarian as a weak and unworthy one. Nowhere, in fact, through the whole circuit of the Roman world, was so long

¹ Zosimus, lib. vi. c. 10, ap. Mon. Hist. Brit. p. lxxix.

and so desperate a resistance offered to the assailants of the Empire. Unaided as she was left, Britain held bravely out as soon as her first panic was over; and for some thirty years after the withdrawal of the legions the free province maintained an equal struggle against her foes.¹ Of these she probably counted the Saxons as still the least formidable. The freebooters from Ireland were not only scourging her western coast, but planting colonies at points along its line. To the north of the Firth of Clyde these "Scots" settled about this time in the peninsula of Argyle. To the south of it they may have been the Gael who mastered and gave their name to Galloway; and there are some indications that a larger though a less permanent settlement was being made in the present North Wales. The Pict was an even more pressing danger. If he made no settlements, his raids grew fiercer and fiercer; and though once at least a general rising of despair drove him back from the very heart of the country,² as the fifth century wore on Britain was torn with a civil strife which made united resistance impossible. Its fortunes indeed at this

¹ Later tradition attributed the Wall and the castles of the Saxon Shore to this time. Gildas (ed. Stevenson), *Hist.* see. 18.

² Gildas (*Hist.* c. xx.) makes a fruitless appeal to the Empire precede this rally. As the letter is to "Agitio ter consuli," and Ætius was consul for the third time in 446, it cannot have been earlier than this date. (Guest, *Origines Celticæ*, ii. 165-6.) For the political struggles, see Guest, *ibid.* 172-3.

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time have reached us only in late and questionable traditions;¹ but there is much to confirm the main outline of the story which these traditions preserve. City and country, Roman part and native part, may well have risen in arms against one another; and under a leader of native blood the latter seem to have been successful over their Romanized opponents. But even this failed to unite the province when the Pict poured afresh over the Roman Wall and the boats of the Irish and English marauders appeared again off its coasts. The one course which seemed left was to imitate the fatal policy by which Rome had invited its doom while striving to avert it, the policy of matching barbarian against barbarian.² It was

¹ Our only British informants for this period, as for the conquest that followed it, are Gildas ("Historia" and "Epistola,"—really a single work; cf. Stubbs and Haddan, "Councils," i. p. 44) and Nennius ("Hist. Britonum"). Both are edited by Stevenson, and the first may be found in *Mon. Hist. Brit.* The genuineness of Gildas, which has been doubted, may now be looked on as established (see Stubbs and Haddan, "Councils of Britain," i. p. 44). Skene ("Celtic Scotland," i. 116, note) gives a critical account of the various biographies of Gildas. He seems to have been born in 516, probably in the North-Welsh valley of the Clwyd; to have left Britain for Armorica when thirty years old, or in 546; to have written his history there about 556 or 560; to have crossed to Ireland between 566-569; and to have died there in 570. For the nature and date of the compilation which bears the name of Nennius, see Guest, "Origines Celticæ," ii. p. 157, and Stevenson's introduction to his edition of him. In its earliest form it is probably of the seventh century. Little, however, is to be gleaned from the confused rhetoric of Gildas; and it is only here and there that we can use the earlier facts which seem to be embedded among the later legends of Nennius.

² Gildas, *Hist.* c. 22, 23.

with this view that Britain turned to what seemed the weakest of her assailants, and strove to find among the freebooters who were harrying her eastern coast troops whom she could use as mercenaries against the Pict.

INTROD.

**Britain
and its
Foes.**

CHAPTER I

THE CONQUEST OF THE SAXON SHORE

449—c. 500

Landing of
the Jutes.

IN the year 449 or 450¹ a band of warriors was drawn to the shores of Britain by the usual pledges

¹ With Mr. Freeman and Mr. Stubbs I accept the argument of Dr. Guest ("Origines Celticæ," ii. p. 160, etc.) as conclusive in favour of the date 449 or 450 for this first settlement of the invaders. The date really rests on the authority of Gildas and of Bæda. The first places the coming of the strangers after the letter in which the Britons sought help from Ætius in his third consulship, *i.e.* in 446. Bæda, who generally follows Gildas in his story, fixes it in the reign of Marcian, which he believed to begin in 449, and which in his "English Chronicle" he had begun in 452, but which really began in 450 and ended in 457. Bæda's words (H. E. lib. i. c. 15) simply place the landing in Marcian's reign; but they were generally read as assigning it to the first year of his reign, and hence the English Chronicle, followed by later writers, assigned it to 449. The work of Nennius gives three other dates. One passage, added in the ninth century, and therefore of little weight, assigns it to 392. Another places it in 428. But the only important statement is one which Mr. Skene attributes to the work "as originally compiled in the seventh century," and which runs, "Regnante Gratiano secundo Equantio Romæ Saxones a Guorthigerno suscepti sunt anno (*quadringentesimo*, Stev.) *trecentesimo quadragesimo septimo* post passionem Christi." (Nennius, ed. Stevenson, c. 31.) This would be 374, when Gratian was consul with Equitius;

of land and pay. The warriors were Jutes, men of a tribe which has left its name to Jutland, at the extremity of the peninsula that projects from the shores of North-Germany, but who were probably akin to the race that was fringing the opposite coast of Scandinavia and settling in the Danish Isles. In three "keels"—so ran the legend of their conquest—and with their Ealdormen, Hengest and Horsa, at their head, these Jutes landed at Ebbsfleet¹ in the Isle of Thanet.

With the landing of Hengest and his war-band English history begins.² We have no longer to

and probably arose from a confusion of the great inroad of the Saxons which occupied Theodosius in the first and second years of Gratian's rule, with their permanent landing in Britain. The arguments for these earlier dates have been recently restated in Skene, "Celtic Scotland," i. 146 *et seq.*

¹ "Eopwine's fleet," English Chronicle, a. 449. The older name for Thanet, Ruim, is preserved in the local name, Ramsgate.

² The story of the English conquest as a whole rests on the authority of the "English Chronicle," as to the general composition and value of which I shall speak more largely later on. The annals from 449 to the end of the English conquest—with which we are here concerned—were probably embodied in the Chronicle in the middle of the ninth century. "They represent," says Mr. Earle, "the gleanings and reconstruction of the half-lost early history of Wessex at the time of the first compilation in 855. Embodying antiquities of a high type, this section is not the oldest composition preserved in this Chronicle. It is such history as could still be made out of oral traditions, and it probably represents the collected information of the bardic memory, aided by the runic stones and the roll of kings." (Earle, "Two Parallel Chronicles," Introduction, p. ix.) Into some of these early entries a mythical element certainly enters (as in the names of Port and Wihtgar, eponyms of Portsmouth and Wihtgaraburh or Carisbrook), and we may perhaps detect traces of "an artificial chronology in which eight and four are prevalent factors" (Earle, Par. Chron. Intr.

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watch the upgrowth of Roman life in a soil from which Roman life has been swept away, or to question the dim records of a vanished past in the vain hope of recalling the life that our fathers lived in their homeland by the Baltic. From the hour when they set foot on the sands of Thanet we follow the story of Englishmen in the land they made their own. There is little to catch the eye in Ebbsfleet itself, a mere lift of ground with a few grey cottages dotted over it, cut off nowadays from the sea by a reclaimed meadow and a sea-wall. Taken as a whole, indeed, the scene has a wild beauty of its own. To the right the white curve of Ramsgate cliffs looks down on the crescent of Pegwell Bay, while far away to the left across grey marsh-levels, where tiny smoke-wreaths mark the sites of Richborough and Sandwich, the coastline bends dimly to the fresh rise of cliffs beyond Deal. But a higher sense than that of beauty draws us to the landing-place of our fathers. No spot in Britain can be so sacred to Englishmen as that which first felt the tread of English feet. Everything in the character

p. ix. ; see, however, on this matter, Guest, *Origines Celticæ*, ii. p. 161 *et seq.*); but there is no real ground for the general scepticism as to the whole run of dates and facts expressed by writers such as Lappenberg (*Angl. Sax.* (1881), i. 97 *et seq.*). See Stubbs (*Constit. Hist.* i. 46) and Guest (*Origines Celticæ*, ii. 161, etc.), whose conclusions are accepted by Mr. Freeman (*Norm. Conq.* i. 9, note). The later English accounts of this period, such as those of Asser, Æthelweard, or Florence, are all based on the Chronicle.

of the ground confirms the tradition which fixes this spot at Ebbsfleet; for, great as the physical changes of the country have been since the fifth century, they have told little on its main features. At the time of Hengest's landing a broad inlet of sea parted Thanet from the mainland of Britain, for the marshes which stretch from Reculver to Sandwich were then, as they remained for centuries,¹ a wide sea-channel, hardly less than a mile across, through which vessels from Gaul commonly made their way into the estuary of the Thames. The mouth of this inlet was narrowed by two sandspits, now lost in the general level of the soil, but which at that time jutted out from either shore into the waves. On the southern spit stands the present town of Sandwich, while the northern is still known by the name of Ebbsfleet. If the war-ships of the pirates therefore were cruising off the coast at the moment when the bargain which gave them Thanet was struck, their disembarkation at Ebbsfleet, where they first touched its soil, was natural enough. The choice of the spot suggests too that their landing was a peaceful one. Richborough, a fortress whose broken ramparts rise hard by above the

¹ In Bæda's day this channel was about three furlongs wide (Bæda, H. E. lib. i. c. 25). The tolls of the ferry over it at Sarre were still valuable in Edward the Third's days; and it was not till the time of Henry the Seventh that the gradual silting up of the inlet forced Kent to replace the ferry by a bridge and road at this point (Archæol. Cantiana, vol. v. p. 306).

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grey flats of Minster marsh, and which was then the common landing-place of travellers from Gaul, was too important a spot to have been left without a British garrison. Even if it had ceased to be the station of the fleet that guarded the Channel, it still commanded the road which ran through Kent to London; and some force must have replaced the legionary troops that held it when it was the headquarters of the Count of the Saxon Shore. That no record remains of any encounter with these troops at Richborough may well have been because the Jutes who landed under Hengest landed not as enemies but as allies.

The Jutes
in Thanet.

The after-course of events indeed seems to show that the choice of this landing-place was the result of a settled design.¹ Between the Briton and his hireling soldiers there could be little trust. Quarters in Thanet would satisfy the followers of Hengest,² who thus lay encamped within sight of their fellow-pirates in the Channel, and who felt themselves secured against the treachery which had often proved fatal to the Germans whom Rome called to her aid by the broad inlet that parted their camp from the mainland. But the choice was no less satisfactory to the provincial himself, trembling—and as the event proved, justly trembling—lest in his zeal against the Pict

¹ We are thrown here wholly on Gildas, sec. 23.

² Solinus speaks of Thanet as fruitful in cornfields. Mon. Hist. Brit. p. x.

he had brought an even fiercer foe into Britain. For his dangerous allies were cooped in a corner of the land, and parted from the bulk of Britain by a sea-channel which was guarded by the strongest fortresses of the coast. The need of such precautions was seen in the disputes which arose as soon as the work for which the mercenaries had been hired was done. In the first years that followed after their landing, Jute and Briton fought side by side; and the Picts are said to have at last been scattered to the winds in a great battle on the eastern coast of Britain. But danger from the Pict was hardly over when danger came from the Jutes themselves. Their numbers probably grew fast as the news of their settlement in Thanet spread among their fellow-pirates who were haunting the Channel; and with the increase of their number must have grown the difficulty of supplying them with rations and pay.

The dispute which rose over these questions was at last closed by Hengest's men with a threat of war. But the threat, as we have seen, was no easy one to carry out.¹ Right across their path in

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Hengest's
inroad.

¹ In tracing the English conquest of Kent, as in the conquest of Sussex and Wessex, I have been mainly guided by the researches of Dr. Gnest ("Early English Settlements in South Britain," in the second volume of *Origines Celticae*, p. 147 *et seq.*). I cannot, with Mr. Freeman, profess myself "an unreserved follower of that illustrious scholar;" for the advance of linguistic science has set aside many of the conclusions he has drawn from Welsh philology, while, in his researches into the history of the princes of North Wales and Damnonia, he has placed far too great a reliance on

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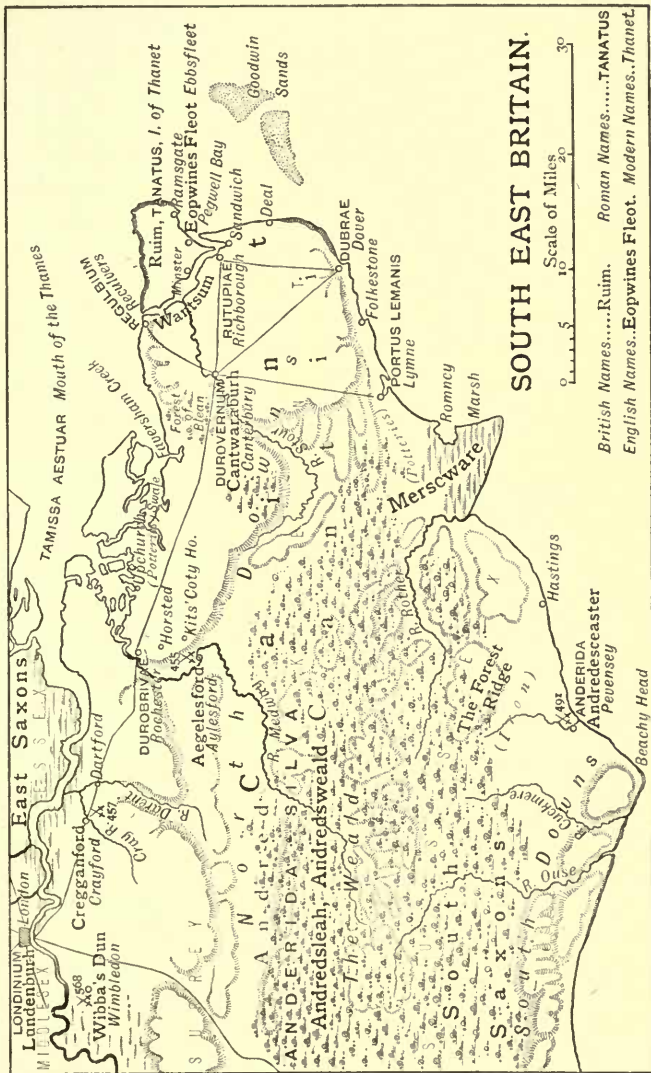
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any attack upon Britain stretched the inlet of sea that parted Thanet from the mainland, a strait which was then traversable only at low water¹ by a long and dangerous ford and guarded at either mouth by fortresses. The channel of the Medway, with the forest of the Weald bending round from it to the south, furnished a second line of defence for our West Kent and Sussex; while the strongholds of Dover and Lymne guarded their portion of the Saxon Shore. Great however as these difficulties were, they failed to check the onset of the Jutes. From the spot at which the conflict between Hengest and the Britons took place in 455,² we may gather that his attack was a sudden one, and that the success of the invaders was due mainly to a surprise. The inlet may have been crossed before any force could be collected to oppose the English onset, or the boats of the Jutes may have pushed from the centre of it up

the documents, many spurious and all tampered with, contained in the Book of Llandaff. (For the real character of these documents, see Mr. Haddan's note in Haddan and Stubbs, "Councils," vol. i. p. 147.) But when these deductions are made, they do little to lessen the debt which our early history owes to Dr. Guest. By his combination of archaeological research and knowledge of the ground, with an exact study of the meagre documentary evidence, he has not only restored, so far as they can be restored, many pages of a lost chapter of our history, that of the Conquest of Britain, but he has furnished a method for after inquirers, of which I have striven, however imperfectly, to avail myself in the pages that follow.

¹ Guest, *Origines Celticæ*, ii. 177, note. By Bæda's day this inlet was known to Englishmen as the Wantsum.

² E. Chron. a. 455.



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the channel of its tributary, the Stour, itself at that time a wide and navigable estuary, to the town that stood on the site of our Canterbury, the town of Durovernum. Durovernum had grown up among the marshes of the Stour, a little cluster of houses raised above the morass on a foundation of piles. But small as the town was, it stood at a point where the roads from Richborough, Dover, and Reculver united to pass by a ford traversable at low water on their way to London; and the military importance of its position was marked by the rough oval of massive walls which lay about it. The strength of the place was doubled by the broad river channel that guarded it on the north-west and the marshy ground which stretched along its north-eastern side. In this quarter a Christian church had risen on a site destined to be occupied in after days by the Mother-Church of all England; while another church, that was to be hardly less memorable in our religious annals, lay without the walls of the town on the road to Richborough.¹ But neither wall nor marshes saved Durovernum from Hengest's onset, and the town was left in blackened and solitary ruin as the invaders pushed along the road to London.

Battle of
Aylesford.

No obstacle seems to have checked their march from the Stour to the Medway. Passing over the

¹ Faussett's "Canterbury till Domesday," *Archæol. Journal*, xxxii. 378; and "Roman Cemeteries in Canterbury," *Archæol. Cantiana*, iv. 27.

heights which were crowned with the forest of Blean, they saw the road strike like an arrow past the line of Frodsham Creek through a rich and fertile district, where country houses and farms clustered thickly on either side of it, and where the burnt grain which is still found among their ruins may tell of the smoke-track that marked the Jutish advance.¹ As they passed the Swale however, and looked to their right over the potteries whose refuse still strews the mud-banks of Upchurch, their march seems to have swerved abruptly to the south. Whether they were drawn aside by greed of plunder, for the Medway valley was then, as now, one of the most fruitful and populous districts of the Caint, or whether they were forced by the guarded walls of the town which is now our Rochester² to turn southwards for a ford across the river, the march of the Jutes bent at this point along a ridge of low hills which forms the bound of the river-valley on the east. The country through which it led them was full of memories of a past which had even then faded from the minds of men ; for the hill-slopes which they traversed were the grave-ground of a vanished race, and scattered among the boulders that strewed the soil rose cromlechs and huge barrows of the dead. One mighty relic survives in the monument now called

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¹ Murray's "Kent," p. 70, of remains at Hartlip.

² See G. T. Clark, "Rochester Castle," *Archæol. Jour.* xxxii. 207.

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Kit's Coty House, a cromlech which had been linked in old days by an avenue of huge stones to a burial-ground some few miles off near the village of Addington. It was from a steep knoll on which the grey, weather-beaten stones of this monument are reared, that the view of their first battle-ground would break on Hengest's warriors; and a lane which still leads down from it through peaceful homesteads would guide them across the river-valley to a ford which has left its name in the village of Aylesford that overhangs it. At this point, which is still the lowest ford across the Medway, and where an ancient trackway crossed the river,¹ the British leaders must have taken post for the defence of West Kent; but the Chronicle of the conquering people² tells nothing of the rush that may have carried the ford or of the fight that went struggling up through the village. We hear only that Horsa fell in the moment of victory; and the flint heap of Horsted, which has long preserved his name, and was held in after-time to mark his grave, is thus the earliest of those monuments of English valour of which Westminster is the last and noblest shrine.³

Repulse of
the Jutes.

The victory of Aylesford was followed by a political change among the assailants, whose loose organization around earldormen was exchanged for

¹ Guest, *Origines Celticae*, ii. 170. For antiquities of Roman date found in this ford, see *Archæol. Cantiana*, i. 174.

² *Eng. Chron.* a. 455.

³ *Beda*, H. E. lib. i. c. 15, and Guest, *Origines Celticae*, ii. 171.

a stricter union. Aylesford, we are told,¹ was no sooner won than "Hengest took to the kingdom, and Æsc, his son." The change no doubt gave fresh vigour to their attack; and the two kings pushed forward in 457 from the Medway to the conquest of West Kent. Forging the Darent at Dartford, they again met the British forces at the passage of the Cray, a little stream that falls through a quiet valley from the chalk downs hard by at Orpington. Their victory must have been complete, for at its close, as the Chronicle of their conquerors tells us, the Britons "forsook Kentland and fled with much fear to London."² But the ground Hengest had won seems soon to have been won back again. If we trust British tradition, the battle at Crayford was followed by a political revolution in Britain itself. The overthrow of the native leader, Vortigern, may have proved fatal to his cause; it would seem at any rate that the Romanized Britons rose in revolt under Aurelius Ambrosianus, a descendant of the last Roman general who claimed the purple as an emperor in Britain; and that the success of Aurelius drove his rival to the mountains of the west.³ The revolution revived for a while the energy of the

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¹ E. Chron. a. 455.

² Eng. Chron. a. 457. It is possible that the "pagus" or territory of Londinium south of the Thames extended to the Cray, as this was the bound of its citizens' right of chase in the Middle Ages.

³ Gildas, Hist. sec. 25; Guest, *Origines Celticae*, ii. 172, etc.

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province. Fresh from his triumph over Vortigern, Aurelius marched on the invaders who were turning Kent into a desert, and his advance forced the Jutes to surrender their conquests and to fall back on their stronghold of Thanet. The fortresses of Richborough and Reculver at either mouth of the inlet which parted Thanet from the mainland still remained in British hands, and basing themselves on the former, the troops of Aurelius seem to have succeeded for some years in imprisoning Hengest in his island-lair.¹

Rich-
borough

Richborough had long served as the headquarters of the legion whose business it was to guard the Saxon Shore; and its site was one of great military strength.² The mouth of the Wantsum was narrowed, as we have seen, by the two jutting sandspits of Ebbsfleet and Sandwich; but within these the estuary widened again into a northern and a southern bay, the one beneath the slopes of Minster, the other between Sandwich and the little hamlet of Fleet. The last bay formed a shallow lagoon, whose oyster-beds were famous in the markets of Rome, and a small rise or islet in the midst of it was crowned by the massive walls of Richborough. The marble buildings within these walls had served no doubt for the residence of the Count of the Saxon Shore. Hard by them

¹ Nennius, sec. 43, 44, 45; Guest, *Origines Celticæ*, ii. 176.

² See map of the district at this time in *Archæol. Cantiana*, viii. 14.

stood an amphitheatre for the games of the legionaries, and the hill-slope was covered by a town which the fortress protected. Small as was the area of the citadel, its walls were twelve feet thick and nearly thirty feet high, and both faces and angles were strengthened by bastions of solid masonry.¹ Against walls such as these, or those of its sister fortress at Reculver, the unskilled efforts of the Jutes could do little, and though no attempt seems to have been made to dislodge them from Thanet, the British forces remained strong enough to prison them for some years within the limits of the island.

In 465 however the petty conflicts which had gone on along the shores of the Wantsum made way for a decisive struggle. Hengest may have been strengthened by reinforcements from his home-land; while the losses of Aurelius show that he had mustered the whole strength of the island to meet the expected onset. But the overthrow of the Britons at Wipped's-fleet² was so terrible that all hope of preserving the bulk of Kent seems from this moment to have been abandoned: and no further struggle disturbed the Jutes in its conquest and settlement. It was only along its southern shore that the Britons now held their ground, and we can hardly doubt it was the

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Final
conquest of
the Caint.

¹ See Roach Smith's "Antiquities of Richborough, Reculver, and Lymne," for excavations on these sites.

² Eng. Chron. a. 465. "There twelve Wealish Ealdormen they slew."

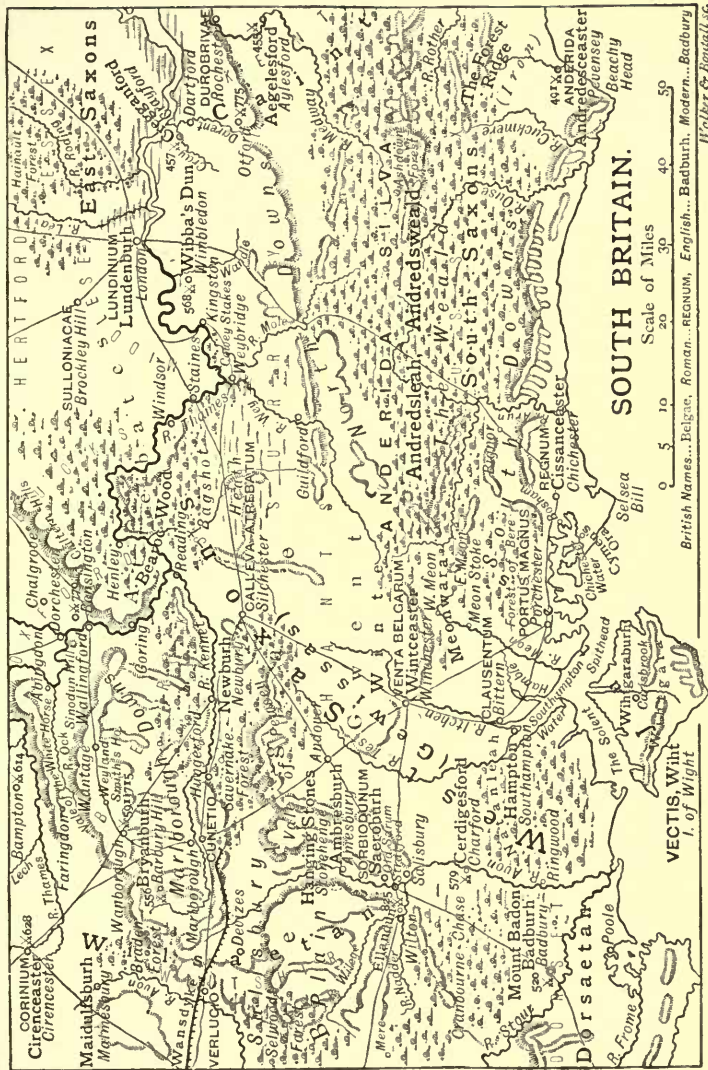
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reduction of the fortresses in this quarter which occupied the later years of Hengest.¹ Richborough and Reculver must have yielded at last to his arms; the beacon-fire which had so long guided the Roman galleys along the Channel ceased to blaze on the cliffs of Dover; and a final victory of the Jutes in 473 may mark the moment when they reached the rich pastures which the Roman engineers had reclaimed from Romney Marsh. A fortress at Lymne, whose broken walls look from the slope to which they cling over the great flat at their feet, was the key to this district; and with its fall the work of the first conqueror was done. In this quarter at least the resistance of the provincials was utterly broken; in the last conflict the Chronicle of the invaders boasts that the Britons "fled from the English as from fire."²

Landing of
 the South
 Saxons.

With this advance to the mouth of the Weald the work of Hengest's men came to an end; nor did the Jutes from this time play any important part in the attack on the island, for their after-gains were limited to the Isle of Wight and a few districts on the Southampton Water. Fully indeed as the Caint was won, no district was less fitted to serve as a starting-point in any attack on Britain at large. While the Andredsweald, which lay in an impenetrable mass along its western border, extended southward behind the swamps

¹ Guest, *Origines Celticæ*, ii. 178. ² Eng. Chron. a. 473.



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of Romney Marsh to the coast of the Channel, a morass that stretched from the hills of Dulwich to the banks of the Thames blocked the narrow strip of open country between the northern edge of the Weald and the river. The more tempting waterway along the Thames itself was barred by the walls, if not by the fortified bridge, of London. The strength of these barriers is proved by the long pause which took place in the advance of the Jutes, for a century was to pass before they made any effort to penetrate further into the island. But their success had called a mightier foe to the work of invasion in the free-booters whose daring and whose ruthlessness were being painted at this moment by the pen of Sidonius. It was pirates of the Saxon race, with Frisians perhaps who sailed under their name,¹ whose long pillage of the coast from the Wash to the Solent had been preserved in its name of the Saxon Shore. It was certain that the conquests of Hengest would call these rivals to their prey, and the settlement of the Jutes was soon followed by Saxon descents on either side of the Caint.² We know best their descent to the westward of it. Beyond Romney Marsh along the Channel the creeks and inlets which break the clay-flats to the westward of the Arun offered easy entrance for

¹ Procopius, *De Bell. Goth.* lib. iv. 20, mentions "Frisians" among the three peoples of Britain.

² Bede, *H. E.* i. c. 15.

the boats of the pirates; and here tradition placed the landing in 477 of Saxon war-bands who followed Ælle and his three sons, Cymen, Wlencing, and Cissa. The first gave his name to the landing-place of the pirates in the Selsea peninsula, Cymen's ora or Keynor; while the name of the last is said to be preserved in that of Chichester, a borough that grew up at a later time on the ruins of the little town of Regnum, which must have been the earliest object of this attack. Their raid was a successful one; and after severe losses the Britons of this district fled to the Andredsweald.¹ But the weakness of the invading force is shown by the slowness with which the Chronicle of the conquerors pictures Ælle as fighting his way in battle after battle across the streams which cleave this strip of coast on their way to the Channel.² It was only after fourteen years of struggle that the Saxons reached the point where the South Downs abut on the sea at Beachy Head, and dipped down in the district that formed the mouth of the Weald, a district guarded by the fortress of Anderida, whose massive walls still cover a rise above the general level of the coast at a spot which under its later

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¹ E. Chron. a. 477. Guest, *Origines Celticae*, ii. 178. The brief entries of the Chronicle are largely expanded by Henry of Huntingdon, who may have used poems or annals still extant in his time, and whose story here at least falls in with the geographical features of the locality.

² E. Chron. a. 485, for the fight at Meareredsburn.

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Anderida.

name of Pevensey was to witness the landing of a greater conqueror in William the Norman.

The siege of Anderida proved a long and a difficult one. Eastward of the fortress the ground lifts slowly towards our Hastings, where a sand-stone ridge abuts upon the sea. This Forest-ridge, as it is called, is in fact the termination of a low rise which forms a water-parting through the whole length of the Weald, and which throws down the streams of the Weald to north and south by channels that they have hewn in the chalk downs on either side of it. Then, as now, the ground was covered with woodland and copses, but under the Roman rule the life of this district presented a striking contrast to the solitude and silence of the rest of the Andredsweald.¹ Hid in its wooded gorges we find traces of a busy population of miners, the small round pits from which the nodules of their ore was dug, rude smelting-furnaces on the hill-slope, big cinder-heaps, covered nowadays with oak and elm. It must have been the attacks of these miners that made the task of the besiegers so hard a one. If we may trust the tradition of a later time,² the Britons swarmed like bees round the English lines, assailing them by night, and withdrawing at dawn to the gorges of the Forest-ridge where they lay in ambush for

¹ See Wright's description of Pevensey in his "Wanderings of an Antiquary."

² Huntingdon, "Historia Anglorum" (ed. T. Arnold), p. 45.

the parties that attacked them. An attempt to storm the town would at once draw the miners on the rear of its assailants ; and when the besiegers, galled by the storm of arrows and javelins, turned from their task to encounter these foes, the Britons drew back to their fastnesses in the Weald. It was not till Ælle was strong enough to detach a part of his force to cover the siege that the resistance of the town came to an end. The terrible words of the Chronicle tell the story of its fall : the English "slew all that were therein, nor was there henceforth one Briton left."¹ The work of slaughter, we can hardly doubt, was soon completed by the attack and conquest of the brave iron-workers who had failed to avert the doom of Anderida ; and from that time to the days of the Edwards no sound of quarryman or forge was heard in the gorges of the Forest-ridge.

Of the victories or settlement of the Saxons along the coast from Chichester to Pevensey we know little or nothing. Nowhere indeed was the land richer in plunder ; for the coast had been occupied by the Romans from the date of their first settlement in Britain, and the country side was dotted with the homes of the wealthier provincials. A country-house such as that whose remains have been discovered at Bignor, a few

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Bignor.

¹ E. Chron. a. 491. Huntingdon adds, "Ita urbem destruxerunt quod nunquam postea re-edificata est : locus tantum quasi nobilissimæ urbis transeuntibus ostenditur desolatus" (*i.e.* in the twelfth century).—Hist. Angl. (ed. Arnold), p. 45.

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miles from Chichester, lights up for us the social life which was swept away by the Saxon sword.¹ The household buildings of this mansion formed a court more than a hundred feet square, round the inner side of which ran a covered colonnade, with a tessellated pavement arranged in fanciful patterns. Within the house itself the hall with its central fountain preserved the southern type of domestic building that the Roman builders brought from their sunnier land, as the furnace which heated the floor of the banqueting-room behind showed the ingenuity with which they accommodated themselves to the needs of a sterner climate. The walls of the larger rooms glowed with frescoes, fragments of which retain much of their original vividness of colour, while their floors were of elaborate and costly mosaic work. Figures of dancing nymphs filled the compartments of one chamber, a picture of the rape of Ganymedes formed the centre of another, a third was gay with pictures of the Seasons or of gladiatorial games, where cupids sported as retarii and secutores of the amphitheatre. But no traces remain of the line of low huts which here, as elsewhere, no doubt, leant against the outer wall that girt in the circuit of buildings, huts which housed the serfs who tilled the lands of their owner, and whose squalor, in its dark contrast with the

¹ Wright, "Celt, Roman, and Saxon," p. 243. There is a fuller description in his "Wanderings of an Antiquary."

comfort and splendour of the mansion itself, would have painted better for us than a thousand passages from law or chronicle the union of material wealth with social degradation that lay like a dark shadow over the Roman world.

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Dimly as we trace this winning of the south-eastern coast by the men who were afterwards known as the Sussex or South Saxons, we pass as from light into darkness when we turn to the work of another Saxon tribe who must at about the same time have been conquering and settling on the other side of the Caint, to the north of the estuary of the Thames.¹ In the utter lack of any written record of the struggle in this quarter, we can only collect stray glimpses of its story from the geographical features of this district and from its local names. From both these sets of facts we are drawn to the conclusion that it was not from the Thames that this district was mainly attacked. In that quarter there was little to tempt an invader. The clay-flats which stretch along the coast of Southern Essex were then but a fringe of fever-smitten and desolate fens, while the meadows

Landing of
the East
Saxons.

¹ Huntingdon (Hist. Angl., ed. Arnold, p. 49) names as the first East-Saxon king, Ercenwine (or as Florence calls him, Æscwine), whose son and successor, Sleda, married the sister of Æthelberht of Kent. As the usage elsewhere was for the conquerors to gather into a kingdom some time after their first conquest, this would bring the landing in Essex to about the time of the landing in Sussex, which is of itself probable enough. Malmesbury makes Sleda their first king (Gest. Reg., lib. i. sec. 98).

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that rise from them to the west were part of a forest-tract that extended to the marshes of the Lea. The whole region indeed beyond the coast was thick with woodland; in the Middle Ages all Essex lay within the bounds of the royal forest: and its timber church-towers and log-framed homesteads still recall its wealth of wood. To the northward, however, the country became somewhat clearer; and here a tempting inlet offered itself in the estuary where the waters of the Chelm and the Stour found a common passage to the sea, and where Camulodunum offered a city to sack.¹ The town stood, like its successor, Colchester, on a steep rise or "dun" round whose northern and eastern sides bent the river Colne. Camulodunum was the oldest of the Roman settlements in Britain: temples and public buildings had already risen indeed within its bounds when the revolt under Boadicea broke the course of Roman conquest. Its size and massive walls² prove it to have become in later days one of the busiest and wealthiest towns of the province; and from the after settlement of its foes we may probably gather that the district beneath its sway spread northward as far as the Stour.

¹ For Camulodunum, see map in Markham's "Life of Fairfax," p. 309, etc., and Freeman, *Archæol. Journal*, xxxiv. 47.

² The circuit is more perfect than anywhere else in Britain; but the walls themselves have been reconstructed in later days. Freeman, *Archæol. Jour.* xxxiv. 55. The museum of the town is rich in Roman relics.

It was in the valleys of the Colne and Stour that the East Saxons, as these warriors came to be called, seem mainly to have settled after the fall of Camulodunum. But here, as in their other conquest in the south, the settlement of the Saxons was small and unimportant. Neither tract indeed was large or fruitful enough to draw to it any great mass of the conquerors, while from neither was it easy to push across their bounds into more fertile districts. As the South Saxons were prisoned within their narrow strip of coast by the reaches of the Andredsweald, so the East Saxons found themselves as effectually barred from any advance into the island by a chain of dense woodlands, the Waltham Chace of later ages, whose scanty relics have left hardly more than the names of Epping and Hainault forests. These woodlands, which stretched at this time in a dense belt on either side the Roding along the western border of the district that the invaders had won from the Thames to the open downs above Saffron Walden, and were backed to the west by the marshy valley of the Lea, whose waters widened into an estuary as it reached the Thames, seem to have been wholly uninhabited, for no trace remains in their area of military stations or of the country houses or burial-places of the provincials. How impassable in fact these fastnesses had been found by the Romans is clear from the fact that even their road-makers never

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 Their
 boundaries.

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attempted to penetrate them. The lower portion of the Ermine Street, the road to the north, which in later days struck direct through this district from London to Huntingdon, did not exist in Roman times, and the British provincial was forced to make a circuit either by Leicester or Colchester on his way to Lincoln and York.¹

Landing of
 the Engle.

This double barrier to the west proved formidable enough to hold the invaders at bay for almost a hundred years. But to the northward no such barrier hindered the East Saxons from sharing in a fight that must have been going on at this time in the chalk uplands which rose to the north of them across the Stour. It is in this district that we first meet with a third race of conquerors, whose work was to be of even greater moment in our history than that of Saxon or Jute. The men who were to spread along the Yare and the Orwell, and to march in triumph through the massive gate which recalls the strength of Roman Lincoln, whose work it was to colonize Mid-Britain and the line of the Trent, as well as to win for their own the vast regions between the Firth of Forth and the Humber, were drawn from a tribe whose name was destined to absorb that of Saxon and Jute, and to stamp itself on the people which sprang from the union of the conquerors of Britain, as on the land which they won.² These were the Engle

¹ Guest, "Four Roman Ways," *Origines Celticae*, ii. 218.

² Beda, H. E. i. 15.

[illegible][illegible]

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or Englishmen. The bulk of the tribes who then bore this name, if in the darkness of their early history they have been rightly traced by modern research, lay probably along the middle Elbe in the country about Magdeburg; while fragments of the same race were found on the Weser, in what is now known as Lower Hanover and Oldenburg, and in the peninsula which juts from the shores of North Germany to part the Baltic and the Northern Seas.¹

The East
Engle.

It is in the heart of this peninsula that we still find the district which preserves their name of Angeln or the Engleland; and from the desert state of this district as men saw it hundreds of years afterwards,² it would seem that, unlike their Saxon neighbours, the bulk of whom remained in their own homesteads, the whole Engle people forsook their earlier seats for the soil of Britain. Such a transfer would account for the wide area of their conquests. Of their invasion or settlement no chronicle has come down to us,³ but their first descents seem to have been aimed against the upland into which the northernmost chalk-rises

¹ Stubbs, *Const. Hist.* i. 45.² Bæda, *H. E.* i. 15.

³ Of the conquest of East Anglia, Lincolnshire, the Fen-land, Mid-Britain, and Yorkshire, we have no record, either on the part of conquered or conquerors. In Northumbria the Chronicle tells only the fact of Ida's elevation to the kingship and seizure of Bamborough; while Nennius preserves a faint tradition of some of the earlier conflicts. We are forced, therefore, to fall back on the indications given us by archæology and by the physical character of the ground itself in attempting a rough sketch of the English advance.

that diverge from the Berkshire downs widen as they reach the sea. This tract, which comprises our present shires of Norfolk and Suffolk, had drawn settlers to it from the earliest times of British history. It had been the seat of the Iceni, the most powerful of the tribes among whom the island had been parted before the Roman rule, and whose name, like that of the "Gwent" in which they lived, was preserved in a Venta Icenorum that was the predecessor of our Norwich. The downs which form its western portion were for the most part stretches of heath and pasture, over which wandered huge flocks of bustards; but in the river-courses that break through the levels of clay and gravel between these downs and the sea, population and wealth had grown steadily through the ages of Roman rule; and the importance of the country was shown by the care with which the provincial administration had guarded its coast.

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The district formed in fact the last unconquered remnant of the Saxon Shore. But only their ruins tell us of the fall of its strongholds, of Brancaster on the shore of the Wash, or of Garianonum at the mouth of the Yare; while not even its ruins remain to tell of the fall of Venta Icenorum, or of the conquest of the district that lay around it. All we learn from the scanty record of later days is that the assailants of this region came direct from the German shores; that their attacks were

Their
conquests.

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"many and oft"; and that countless strifes between these little parties and the ealdormen who headed them broke their war against the British.¹ From the size of the later hundreds we may perhaps gather that the conquerors settled thickly over the soil,² while their local names lead us to believe that offshoots from the Saxon houses who were conquering on the Colne joined the Engle in their attack on the Gwent.³ The very designations of Norfolk and Suffolk tell how one folk of the conquerors fought its way inland from the estuary at Yarmouth up the valleys of the Ouse, the Wensum, the Yare, and the Waveney, to the northern half of the upland, while another and a lesser folk struck up from the common mouth of the Orwell and the Stour to the southern downs.⁴ Norwich, no doubt, formed the central

¹ Huntingdon, *Hist. Angl.* (ed. Arnold), p. 48. "Eâ tempestate venerunt multi et sæpe de Germaniâ, et occupaverunt East-Angle et Merce; sed nequid sub uno rege redacta erant. Plures autem procures certatim regiones occupabant, unde innummerabilia bella fiebant: procures vero, quia multi erant, nomine carent."

² One Norfolk hundred, that of Humbleyard, contains less than 23,000 acres, or less than many single townships in Yorkshire or Lancashire.

³ See lists in Kemble, "Saxons in England," i. 456, etc.

⁴ Flor. Worc. ed. Thorpe (i. 260), in one of the appendices to his work, fixes approximately the date of this conquest: "Regno posterius Cant-wariorum, et prius regno Occidentalium Saxonum, exortum est regnum Orientalium Anglorum," i.e. its "kingdom" was set up between 455 and 519. Bæda, speaking of Rædwald, who was king of the East Angles at the close of the sixth century, calls him "filius Tytili, cujus pater fuit Vuffla, a quo reges Orientalium Anglorum Vuffingas appellant." (H. E. ii. 15.) If Uffa was the first king, the

settlement of the one folk, as Sudbury may have formed that of the other; and though there are enough common names among each to show what their after history implies—that there was no deep severance between them—the far greater number of local designations which are peculiar to either district¹ points to a real individuality in the “folks” who conquered them. From the downs the conquerors again pushed inland to the flats at their feet, and the vale of the little Ouse was included in their territory. But they cannot have been vigorous assailants of the towns about the Wash, if the rampart which runs across Newmarket Heath from Rech to Cowledge was, as is possible, their work.² The Devil’s Dyke, as this barrier is called, is clearly a work of defence against enemies advancing from the Fens, and as a defence to the East Anglians it was of priceless value, for stretching as it did from a point where the country became fenny and impassable to a point where the woods equally forbade all access,

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beginning of the kingdom cannot be thrown much further back than the latter date of 519; and as we must allow for a period of isolated conquests and anarchy before this date the first descents of the East Engle cannot be far from the time at which we have placed them.

¹ See the lists in Kemble, “Saxons in England,” vol. i. p. 456.

² Its ditch faces towards Cambridgeshire and the Fens (Camden’s “Britannia,” 1753, vol. i. 487). It was the boundary of the kingdom as well as of the diocese of East Anglia. The name is probably a Christian version of Woden’s dyke or Wansdyke.

CHAP. I. it covered the only entrance into the country they
 The had won. But if the dyke be a work of the
 Conquest of the Saxon conquerors of this part of the coast, its purely
 Shore. defensive character shows that their attack was
 449-c. 500. at an end; and that it was rather as assailants
 than as a prey that they regarded the towns of
 central Britain.

Saxon Shore conquered. But even if the invaders were forced to halt
 at this stage of their advance, they were now
 firmly planted on British soil. With the settle-
 ment of East Anglia the conquest of the Saxon
 Shore was complete, and the whole coast of Britain
 from the Wash to Southampton Water was in the
 hands of the invader. Its fortresses were broken
 down. Its towns were burned and desolate. A
 new people was planted on its soil. Even if we
 look on the dates given by English tradition as
 at best approximations to the truth, they can
 hardly be wrong when they point out this district
 as having been the first to be won, and as having
 taken long years in the winning. It is indeed the
 slow progress of the invaders, and the bitterness
 which would naturally spring from so protracted
 a struggle, that best accounts for the differences
 which even a casual examination of the map dis-
 closes between the settlement of the conquerors
 here and their settlement in central or northern
 Britain; for nowhere is the English settlement so
 thick, nowhere do we find the tribal houses so
 crowded on the soil, or the hundreds, in which

the settlers grouped themselves, so small and so thickly clustered.¹

¹ Kemble, in his "Saxons in England," pointed out that the hundreds along the coast—which he regarded as representing the settlements of the free settlers—were smaller and thicker than those of the interior: and as regards the Saxon Shore, this is true enough. Elsewhere it does not apply in the same degree; and Professor Stubbs urges that "Gloucester and Wiltshire are as minutely subdivided as Devonshire and Dorsetshire" (Const. Hist. i. 113, note). But this hardly tells against the identification of the smaller hundreds with the earlier settlements, as Devon and Dorset are, like Gloucestershire, among later conquests, or against the truth of Kemble's statement if it be restricted to the Saxon Shore.

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Conquest of
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Shore.

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CHAPTER II

CONQUESTS OF THE ENGLE

c. 500—c. 570

Barriers of
Britain.

To the province the loss of the Saxon Shore must have been a terrible loss; for with its conquest Britain was cut off from the Continent, she was isolated from the rest of the civilized world, and a fresh impulse must have been given to the anarchy that had begun in the strife of her Romanized and Celtic populations. But greatly as it might weaken Britain, the loss of this tract was far from throwing her open to the invaders. We have seen what barriers held back the Jute of Kent and the Saxon on either side of him; but barriers as impassable held back the Engle of the eastern Gwent, for the forest-line which began on the Thames reached on along their western frontier to the Wash, and the Wash stretched to the northward from Newmarket to the sea. The fens which occupied this huge break in the eastern coast of Britain covered in the sixth

CHAP. 11.

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of the
Engle.c. 500-
c. 570.

century a far larger space than now;¹ for while they stretched northward up the Witham almost as far as Lincoln, and southwards up the Cam as far as Cambridge, they reached inland to Huntingdon and Stamford, and the road between those places skirted their bounds to the west. So vast a reach of tangled marsh offered few temptations to an invader; and we shall see grounds at a later time for believing that the Gyrwas, as the Engle freebooters who found a home in its islands called themselves, were for a long time too weak to break through the line of towns that guarded its inner border.

Conquest of
Lindsey.

Had the invaders pushed inland only from this quarter, therefore, the resistance of the Britons might have succeeded in prisoning them within the bounds of the Saxon Shore, as that of Gaul at a later day prisoned the Northmen within the bounds of Normandy. But the sixth century can hardly have been long begun when each of the two peoples who had done the main work of conquest opened a fresh attack on the flanks of the tract they had won. On its western flank, as we shall see, the Saxons appeared in the Southampton Water. On its northern flank the Engle appeared in the estuaries of the Forth and of the Humber. To the south of this last great opening in the coast the oolitic range that stretches

¹ Pearson's Historical Maps of England, p. 3, and map of "Britannia Romana."

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Conquests
of the
Engle.

c. 500-
c. 570.

across Mid-Britain from the Cotswolds through Northamptonshire abuts on the waters of the river-mouth; while to the east of the oolites, across the muddy stream of the Ancholme, rises a parallel line of chalk heights, cut off from the chalk-upland of East Anglia by the Wash. As it extends to the south the oolitic range is broken by a deep depression through which the Witham makes its way to the Wash; and to the south of the Witham, over the country which is now known as Kesteven,¹ a mass of dense woodland stretched from the fen-country about Boston across the heights into the basin of the Trent. The two uplands, however, which lay to the north of this wold tract formed even then a populous and fertile part of Britain. Roman industry had begun the work of draining its marshes; its long reaches of heath were already broken with farms and homesteads; and the houses which lay dotted over the country side show by the character of their ruins that its landowners were men of wealth and culture. The Ermine Street from the south struck like an arrow from Stamford through the woods of Kesteven along the crest of the heights, to drop suddenly into the valley of the Witham as it breaks through them; and uniting with the Fosse Road from the Trent valley as it crossed the river, again climbed the steep slope on the

¹ Camden, "Britannia" (ed. 1753), vol. i. p. 554. See Camden's Map of Lincolnshire.

other side of the gap, over which streams nowadays in picturesque confusion the modern city of Lincoln. At the edge of the tableland to which this ascent leads, on a site marked by the minster and castle that now tower over the city, stood the square fortress of the first Roman Lindum; and through this earlier town the road struck by the Portway Gate, which is still left to us, straight onward to the upland without its walls. Here, as elsewhere however, the growth of the place had brought about an extension of its defences; a fortified suburb spread down the hill in the line of the modern Lincoln to the stream which even then furnished an important inlet for the coasting trade of central Britain; and since the close of the Roman rule the citizens seem to have striven to strengthen their walls by raising a line of earthworks to the north of the town.¹ But growth and commerce were alike brought to an end by the storm which fell on them; and town and suburb must have been left a heap of ruins while their conquerors spread over the deserted country north of the Witham and settled down in croft and homestead as the Lindiswara, the "dwellers about Lindum."²

The conquest of Lindsey however brought the

¹ See G. T. Clark, "Lincoln Castle," *Archæol. Journal*, xxxiii. 213. Freeman, "Norman Conquest," iv. 212.

² We have no means of dating the settlement of the Lindiswara; but we can hardly be wrong in placing it between that of the East Engle and the Deirans.

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The York-
shire Wolds.

Engle little save plunder. The estuary of the Humber, with a huge swamp that spread along the bed of the lower Trent, and of which a portion remains in the Isle of Axholme, girt these uplands in on the north and north-west; while over the whole of the modern shire south of the Witham, from Lincoln to Stamford, stretched the thick woods of Kesteven, and the Holland of the Fens. It was only along the Foss road from Lincoln to Newark that the country was open for an advance; and along this the Lindiswara may have crept slowly to the Trent. But it was the effort of another tribe of conquerors that brought the Engle fairly into the heart of Britain. While the assailants of Lindsey had been striking from the Humber over the heights and wolds on the south of its estuary, other Engle adventurers must have been seizing the flat promontory or naze at the mouth of the Humber to which they gave the name of Holderness. Fertile as drainage has now made this district, it can then have been little more than a narrow line of mud flats, which offered small temptation for settlement. But across the stream of the Hull, in whose marshy and desolate channels men hunted the beaver which gave its name to our Beverley, the ground rises gently to a crescent of chalk-downs, the wolds that run from the Humber by Market-Weighton to the cliffs of Flamborough Head. Though dykes and gravel-mounds scar their

DEIRA and the TRENT VALLEY

Scale of Miles

0 10 20 30 40



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 of the
 Engle.
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 c. 570.

surface, the want of water would have always prevented any settlement on these wolds; they must have been at this time mere sheep-walks, as they remained till half a century ago, and could be easily overrun by the invader. The Wolds, however, were hardly mastered when their conquerors looked on a richer and more tempting country. To north and to west the chalk-heights plunge abruptly down steep slopes of scanty turf to a plain at their feet, through which the stream of the Derwent bends from its rise beside the sea on the east to pour its waters into the Humber. The springs that break from the base of the cliffs make the lower Derwent vale a rich and fertile country; and here, as the local names show, the houses of the conquerors, the Deirans as they came to call themselves, were thickly planted. The district about Weighton seems to have been chosen as the sacred ground of their settlement; and a temple of their gods is said by local tradition to have stood in the village of Goodmanham.¹ On the north the narrower space of the upper vale forced them to hug the heights more closely; though the fall of Derventio, which lay probably on the site of Malton, would open to them the country round it, where their kings in later days found a favourite home.² Holderness,

¹ The site of the temple was shown in Bæda's day (H. E. ii. 13).

² Bæda, H. E. ii. 9.

the Wolds, and the valley of the Derwent now form the East Riding of Yorkshire; and it is likely enough that this local division preserves, however roughly, the boundaries of the earlier kingdom of the Deirans.

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 of the
 Engle.
 c. 500-
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But they were soon drawn onward. Beyond the green meadows at the feet of the Wolds stretched away to the westward and the northward one of the richest and most fertile regions in Britain. Country houses of rich landowners studded thickly the tract of red marls that spreads along the Wharfe and the Ouse; and in the midst of this level stood the city of York or Eboracum,¹ once the capital of Britain. The town lay on a tongue of land between the broad channel of the Ouse and the bed of a lesser stream, the Foss, which came through a marshy and difficult country from the woodlands beneath the Wolds. To the military importance and strength of its position were doubtless due the existence of the camp whose limits are still marked by the small square of massive walls that enclosed in Trajan's day the

¹ Phillips (Archæol. Journal, vol. x. 183) infers from a study of roads, etc., that "Eboracum was not situated on the earliest track of the middle road to the north. That track in fact went from near Tadcaster to Aldborough, leaving York ten miles to the right. But at the epoch of the Antonine Itinerary the direct route was abandoned, and the deviation through Eboracum substituted." Freeman, "Norman Conquest," iv. 202, and Raine, "Historians of the Church of York," i. pref. (Rolls series), throw light on the early topography of York, whose Roman antiquities may be studied in the "Eboracum" of Drake and the "Eburacum" of Wellbeloved.

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earlier Roman city.¹ But the town soon overleapt these bounds. Placed as it was at the head of the tidal waters of the Ouse, and forming the natural centre of northern Britain, it became under Severus the seat of the provincial government and the headquarters of the force which guarded Britain against the Picts. Before the close of the Roman rule it covered the whole area of the modern city on either side of the Ouse, while beyond it lay suburbs a mile in length and roads lined with tombs.² As the dwelling-place of the Cæsar Constantius, York became for a while one of the Imperial cities of the Empire. It was yet more illustrious as the birthplace of Constantine,

¹ A broken tablet in the York Museum, which tells of work done by the ninth legion in Trajan's day, is the earliest monument of Eboracum. Another, of a Decurio, shows the form taken by its municipal administration.

² The wealthier class of burghers and officials are found buried along the road to Calcaria or Tadcaster. It is from these tombs that the relics of Roman life preserved at York have mostly been drawn, fragments of the fine Samian ware brought for rich citizens' use from the Continent, curious egg-shell pottery, vases and cups from a woman's toilet-case, sepulchral figures of soldiers and citizens, and the like. On the right bank of the Ouse, at a short distance to the right of the road to Calcaria, was discovered, in 1873 (Murray's "Yorkshire," p. 70), a "cemetery for a poorer class than that which raised its monuments nearer to the great road, and for some distance along its course. In some parts of the ground Roman carters had been in the habit of shooting rubbish from the neighbouring city. There were thick strata of Roman bricks, mortar, and pottery, mingled with fragments of wall plaster, on which coloured patterns were distinct. Adjoining this rougher portion of the cemetery two or three deep pits or putei were found, into which, as was usual, the bodies of slaves had been thrown carelessly and pell-mell, as was evident from the confused mass of bones in all possible positions."

and as the spot from which he started on that wonderful career which changed the face of the world. The work of Constantine left its traces on Eboracum, as on the rest of the Empire; its bishop took his place beside the Imperial Vicar; and the shrines of Serapis and Mithras, which were frequent in the older city, were superseded by a Christian basilica. With the departure of the Roman administration, however, and with the inroads of the Pict, the glory of the city passed away; but it remained a strong and wealthy place, the head, it may be, of a confederacy of the neighbouring cities to which its high-roads led; and the marks of its greatness survived in the lofty walls¹ and towers which awed Alcuin two centuries later, as well as in the "proofs of Roman refinement" that were still visible in the days of William of Malmesbury.²

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of the
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In the century that had passed since the close of the Roman rule York had probably felt the need of additional defence; and modern inquiry has detected the work of its citizens in the mound of earth which encloses the modern city and which

 Conquest of
Yorkshire.

¹ One noble fragment of its wall survives in a bastion, cased with neat masonry of small ashlar blocks, which are broken by a line of red brick. The tower is embowered nowadays in greenery and gay with flowers. From its base the ground falls in steep slopes to the river, lying deep in what is still a green ravine. This tower stood at the south-west angle of the Roman city.

² Raine, "Hist. of Church of York," i. pref. xiii., who adds, "In no other Roman city in Britain have remains of equal number and importance been discovered" (xv.)

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serves as a base for its later wall.¹ But the effort proved a fruitless one, and after a struggle whose incidents are lost for us, the town like its neighbour cities lay a desolate ruin, while its conquerors spread slaying and burning along the valley of the Ouse.² Along its southern course, indeed, there was little worth the winning. The moorlands that lie close to York on the west run onwards to the Peak of Derbyshire in a wild region of tumbled hills, traversed but by a few pack-roads,³ a region which formed a British kingdom that for a hundred years to come defied the arms of the invaders;⁴ and though these moorlands of Elmet sheer away from the Ouse as it passes to the Humber, the broadening level which stretched along its lower course, as along the lower channels of the Wharfe, the Aire, and the Don that come down to it from the moors, was then a wild waste of oak-forest and fen.⁵ Through this tract in the narrow strip of open tillage between the marshes and the edge of Elmet, ran the one road which led from central Britain to the plain of York, crossing the Don at

¹ G. T. Clark, "The Defences of York," *Archæol. Journal*, vol. xxxi. 232.

² "Every Roman station and house in the north shows traces of having been destroyed by fire."—Raine, "*Hist. of Ch. of York*," i. pref. xvii.

³ Phillips traces and examines these. *Archæol. Journ.* vol. x. p. 181.

⁴ This district answers roughly to the present West Riding.

⁵ This was the district of Hatfield Chase, a northern outlier of the great fen through which the Trent made its way to the Humber.

Doncaster and its two fellow-rivers at Castleford and at Tadcaster, where it bent sharply aside to Eboracum. The fall of these cities must have accompanied the conquest of this district, but the towns seem to have been small, and save at Calcaria the country would furnish small room for settlement. North of York, as the road crossed the Don and struck up the Swale by Catterick¹ to the Tees, a fairer and wider tract opened before the invaders, and the peasants of Aldborough show on the flooring of their cottages mosaic pavements that bear witness to the luxury and refinement which passed away in the wreck of Isurium.² It was along this central plain, however, that the

¹ Cataractonium seems from its remains to have been little more than a small walled station, from which the northern road struck across the desolate moors to the wall, while a side-track ran north-westward to Lavatæ, or Bowes, in Cumberland.

² Isurium can have been little inferior to York in size or wealth. As the forest of Galtres blocked all passage eastward of the Ouse, it was by the western bank of the river that the main road struck to the north across the lower channel of the Nidd and the passage over the Ure at Isurium. As commanding this passage, Isurium was a military point of some importance, but it was also important as the point of junction of this great northern main-road with a road which came from the vale of Malton and Derwent to the east, skirting the northern edge of Galtrés forest, along the slopes of the Hambleton Hills, as with a second which came directly from Tadcaster and the south, and a third which came from Ilkley and the western moors. The rude masses of gritstone, some twenty feet high, which stand in the fields hard by, and are here known as the "Devil's Arrows," suggest an equal importance in yet earlier ages, as do possibly the large round mounds that stood outside the city walls, and one of which still remains. From the existing traces of foundations, the city must have been a closely-packed mass of narrow lanes. "Traces of fire," we are told, "are still visible on parts of the walls."

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Deirans could alone find booty. The cliff-like face of the Hambleton Hills, towering over a forest¹ that extended along the Ouse on its eastern bank just above York, guarded moorlands which stretched from the vale of Derwent to that of the Tees; and it was only along the little stream-courses which ran down to the vale of Pickering, or in the openings which break the line of its coast, that the Engle can have settled in the lonely wilds which they named "Cliff-land" or Cleveland. Nor can their settlements have been thicker in the moorlands that fronted them on the north-west. The border line of Yorkshire still marks the furthest bounds to which they drove the Britons as they won their way up Wharfedale, or traversed the wide dip of Ribblesdale, or pushed across broad pastures and through primæval woodsthat sheltered the wolf and the wild white oxen over the gap of Stainmore along the road from Catterick to Carlisle.²

¹ The later forest of Galtres formed a relic of this woodland. Even in the Middle Ages Galtres extended from the walls of York as far northward as Easingwold and Craik, and as far eastward as Castle-Howard. In Leland's day the part of the forest between Castle-Hutton and York was, near York itself, "moorish and low ground, and having little wood, in the other part higher and reasonably wooded." It then abounded in wild deer. So lonely was the waste north of York that travellers often lost their way when making for the city.

² The story of a flight of an "Archbishop Sampson" from York on its fall about A.D. 500 to Brittany is simply an invention of the twelfth century, and part of the struggle of the church of Dol against the claims of the see of Tours. (Stubbs and Haddan, "Councils of Great Britain," i. 149, note.) But

If history tells us nothing of the victories that laid this great district at the feet of its conquerors, the spade of the archæologist has done somewhat to reveal the ruin and misery of the conquered people. The caves of the Yorkshire moorlands preserve traces of the miserable fugitives who fled to them for shelter. Such a cave opens on the side of a lonely ravine, known now as the King's Scaur, high up in the moors beside Settle.¹ In primæval ages it had been a haunt of hyænas who dragged thither the mammoths, the reindeer, the bisons, and the bears that prowled in the neighbouring glens. At a later time it became a home of savages, whose stone adzes and flint knives and bone harpoons are still embedded in its floor. But these too vanished in their turn, and this haunt of primitive man lay lonely and undisturbed till the sword of the English invaders drove the Roman provincials for shelter to the moors. The hurry of their flight may be gathered from the relics their cave-life has left behind it. There was clearly little time to do more than to drive off the cattle, the swine, the goats, whose bones lie scattered round the hearth-fire at the mouth of the cave, where they served the wretched fugitives

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The
conquered
Britons.

the date of the fall of York may be fairly accurate. The first King of the Deirans was Ælla, the son of Yfli, whose reign began in 559 (Flor. Worc. ed. Thorpe, i. 268); and we may therefore probably date their invasion as going on during the forty or fifty years before that time.

¹ Boyd Dawkins, "Cave Hunting," pp. 81-125, has given a full account of the series of remains found in this cave.

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 c. 500.
 c. 570.

for food. The women must have buckled hastily their brooches of bronze or parti-coloured enamel, the peculiar workmanship of Celtic Britain, and snatched up a few household implements as they hurried away. The men, no doubt, girded on as hastily the swords, whose daintysword-hilts of ivory and bronze still remain to tell the tale of their doom, and hiding in their breast what money the house contained, from coins of Trajan to the wretched "minims" that showed the Empire's decay, mounted their horses to protect their flight. At nightfall all were crouching beneath the dripping roof of the cave or round the fire that was blazing at its mouth, and a long suffering began in which the fugitives lost year by year the memory of the civilization from which they came. A few charred bones show how hunger drove them to slay their horses for food; reddened pebbles mark the hour when the new vessels they wrought were too weak to stand the fire, and their meal was cooked by dropping heated stones into the pot. A time seems to have come when their very spindles were exhausted, and the women who wove in that dark retreat made spindle whorls as they could from the bones that lay about them.

Northern
 Britain.

While the Engle were thus mastering the future Yorkshire from the estuary of the Humber, they were making an even more important settlement in the estuary of the Forth. No district of Britain had been the scene of so long a conflict as

the country between the Firth of Forth and the Tyne. Throughout the period of the Roman rule this border had been a battle-ground. The Roman conquest of Southern Britain indeed was hardly completed when the pressure of the unconquered tribes to the north forced Hadrian to guard the province by a barrier drawn right across this tract of country.¹ A massive wall, backed to the south by an earthen rampart and a ditch, and strengthened by military stations and watch-towers along its course, stretched for seventy miles across the wild moorlands between the thin strips of cultivated ground which then lined the mouth of the Solway or the Tyne. Nothing gives a livelier picture of Roman Britain on its military side than the remains of this wall and the monuments we find among its ruins. With the departure however of the legion that garrisoned this barrier its whole line must have been left desolate. The towns in its course were merely military stations, which could contribute nothing to its defence when the garrison was withdrawn, and which would be left as deserted as the wall itself. The ground which it traversed indeed was for the most part a waste that could furnish few supplies for its inhabitants; and the troops and camp-followers who held the barrier must have been provided with food and supplies from the headquarters at Eboracum.

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of the
Engle.c. 500-
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¹ Dr. Collingwood Bruce has summed up all we know of this barrier in his volume on "The Roman Wall."

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of the
Engle.

c. 500-
c. 570.

Even had a national force been ready to take the place of the legions, the maintenance of such a garrison involved an organization and expense which can hardly have been possible for the broken province; and the great barrier probably sank at once into solitude and ruin, while the Picts poured unmolested into the country which it guarded. Marks of their havoc may perhaps still be traced in the station that occupied the site of Maryport to the south of Carlisle, amidst whose ruins we find a tower-gate broken down by violence, and the houses of its main street charred with fire.¹ Further south, at Ribchester on the Ribble, amongst the burned wreck of the town, have been found skeletons of men who may have made their last stand against the savage marauders.

The Engle
in Northern
Britain.

Raids such as those of the Picts however, destructive as they must have been, were but passing incidents in the life of Northern Britain, for like the later Highlander the Pict seems to have gathered his booty only to withdraw with it to his native hills; and on the western coast, which was mainly subject to their incursions, the Britons maintained their political existence for centuries to come. A far greater change was wrought by the marauders who assailed this region from its eastern coast. It is possible that descents from North Germany had long since planted Frisian settlers in the valley of the Tweed, and that it is

¹ Wright, "Celt, Roman, and Saxon," 452.

BRITAIN NORTH OF THE WASH.

Scale of Miles
0 10 20 30 40 50

British Names.... Brigantes, Bryneich
Roman Names..... EBORACUM
English Names..... Eborwick
Modern Names..... York



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of the
Engle.c. 500-
c. 570.

to their descents that the Firth of Forth owed its early name of the Frisian Sea.¹ If this were so, Northumbria on either side of the Cheviots cannot have been strange to the German freebooters; and the withdrawal of the legionaries would soon be followed by their appearance off its coasts. But it is not till long after this time that we catch any historical glimpses of English attack.² Through the dim haze of northern tradition we see a chieftain³ struggling in battle after battle at the opening of the sixth century against invaders whose earlier raids reach to the Lennox, but who are gradually held at bay within the basin of the Tweed. Here however they seem by the middle of the sixth century to have made themselves masters of the ground. Along Lothian, or the coast between Lanmermoor and the Forth, they had pushed to the little stream of the Esk, where

¹ Skene, "Celtic Scotland," i. 191. Nennius calls it "Mare Freisicum," cap. 38.

² Nennius, sec. 56, 57. Nennius says that after Hengest's death, his son Octa passed from this district into Kent. There is nothing impossible in a Jutish attack on this coast at this early date: and it receives some support from Malmesbury, "Gesta Regum," i. p. 61, "annis enim uno minus centum Nordhanhimbri duces communi habitu contenti, sub imperio Cantuaritarum privatos agebant," till Ida's choice as king, in 547.

³ Nennius, sec. 56. This is the Arthur, so famous afterwards in romance. Mr. Skene, who has done much to elucidate these early struggles, has identified the sites of these battles with spots in the north (see his "Celtic Scotland," i. 153, 154, and more at large his "Four Ancient Books of Wales," i. 51-58); but as Dr. Guest has equally identified them with districts in the south, the matter must still be looked upon as somewhat doubtful.

their way was barred by the rock-fortress of Myned Agned, the site of the later Edinburgh; while south of the Lammermoor they had advanced along the loops of the Tweed as far as the vale of the Gala-Water, and up the dales and streamlets which lie to the south and to north of it, till their advance was thrown back from the wilder hill country on the west. Here the border line of the Catrail¹ as it strikes through Ettrick Forest marks the border of Welsh and Engle. A barrier as difficult curved round to the south in the line of the Cheviots; but between the extremity of this range and the sea a thin strip of coast offered an open pathway into the country beyond the Tweed; and Ida,—“the Flame-bearer” as the Britons called him,—a chieftain of the invaders, whom they raised in 547 to be their king, seized in this quarter a rock beside the shore, and established a base for further conquest in the fortress of Bamborough.²

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 of the
 Engle.
 c. 500-
 c. 570.

In these earlier conquests of the Bernicians, as Ida's folk were called, the settlement was as complete as in the rest of Britain. Their homes

Their
 settlement.

¹ See Skene, “Celtic Scotland,” i. 162.

² Eng. Chron. a. 547 (probably from the short chronicle annexed to Bæda's history). Bamborough, it tells us, was first enclosed by a hedge or stockade, and then by a wall. Nennius (sec. 63) says that the place took the name of Bamborough from Bebbe, the wife of Æthelfrith. It is some sixteen miles south-east of Berwick. This setting up of a kingdom under Ida is our only certain date for the Bernician settlement, and would place its probable beginning at a time which could not have been long after A.D. 500.

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 Conquests
 of the
 Engle.

c. 500-
 c. 570.

indeed must have been scantily sprinkled over the wild and half-reclaimed country ; but scant as they were, these “hams” and “tons” told as plainly as in other districts the tale of English colonization. Dodlings and Livings left their names to hamlets like Doddington and Livingston ; along the wild coast Tynings and Coldings made their fisher-villages at Tynningham and Coldingham ; while Elphinston and Edmonston preserve the memory of English Elphins and Edmonds who raised their homesteads along the Teviot and the Tweed. Nowhere indeed has the English tongue been preserved in greater purity than in the district which now calls itself southern Scotland.¹ But the years that had been spent in winning this narrow tract show that the Bernician force was but a small one ; and the continued slowness of their southward advance from Bamborough proves that even after the union under Ida their strength was but little increased. Aided as they were by a civil strife which was breaking the strength of the north-western Britons,² Ida and Ida’s six sons had to battle along the coast for half a century more before they could drive the Welsh over the western moorlands, and claim for their own the

¹ See Murray, “Northumbrian English.”

² Thus Ida’s third successor, Hussa, fought against four British kings, Urbgen, Riderchen, Guallanc, and Morcant (Geneal. at end of Nennius). These petty chieftains show how the country was broken up. See for this war, Skene, “Four Ancient Books of Wales,” i. 336 *et seq.*

DEIRA and the TRENT VALLEY

Scale of Miles

0 10 20 30 40



CHAP. II.

Conquests
of the
Engle.c. 500-
c. 570.The Valley
of the Trent.

little valleys of the streams which fell from these moors to the sea through the modern Northumberland.¹

From the wild moors of Northumbria however we must pass southward to what was probably a yet later scene of Engle conquest in the valley of the Trent. Little as we know of the winning of the north, we know less of the winning of central Britain, and not a single record has been left of the progress of the peoples whom we find settled at the close of the century in the districts of our Nottingham, our Leicester, and our Northampton, or on the head waters of the Trent. As their names show, they were of Engle race, and we shall at a later period in our story find reason to believe that their inroads and settlements cannot have taken place at a very early period in the sixth century. There was little indeed at this time to draw invaders to central Britain. At the close of the Roman occupation the basin of the Trent remained one of the wildest and least frequented parts of the island. The lofty and broken moorlands of the Peak, in which the Pennine range as it runs southward from the Cheviots at last juts into the heart of Britain, were fringed, as they sloped to the plain, by a

¹ Our knowledge of the struggle is drawn from what seems to be a bit of genuine Northumbrian chronicle, embedded in the compilation of Nennius, sec. 63. The strife was long and doubtful: "*in illo tempore aliquando hostes, nunc cives, vincebantur.*" *Ida* reigned till 559 (*Eng. Chron. a. 547*).

semicircle of woodlands, round the edge of which the river bent closely in the curve which it makes from its springs to the Humber. On the western flank of the moors a forest known afterwards as Needwood filled up the whole space between the Peak and the Trent, as far as our Burton. On their eastern flank the forest of Sherwood stretched from the outskirts of our Nottingham to a huge swamp into which the Trent widened as it reached the Humber. Here indeed a thin line of clay country remained open on the northern bank of the river, but elsewhere it was only on its southern bank that any space could be found for human settlement. But even on this bank such spaces were small and broken, for to the south-west the moorlands threw an outlier across the river in the bleak upland of Cannock Chase, which stretched almost to the verge of the Forest of Arden, a mighty woodland that rolled away far over southern Staffordshire nearly to the Cotswolds; while in the very centre of the valley they threw a second outlier across the Trent in the rugged fastnesses of Charnwood, which stretched as far as the outskirts of Leicester. Even the open oolitic country that extended from Charnwood to the borders of Lincolnshire was narrowly bounded to the south by the fastnesses of Rockingham forest, which occupied one-half of the modern shire of Northampton.

It was in this tract, along the southern bank

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of the
Engle.

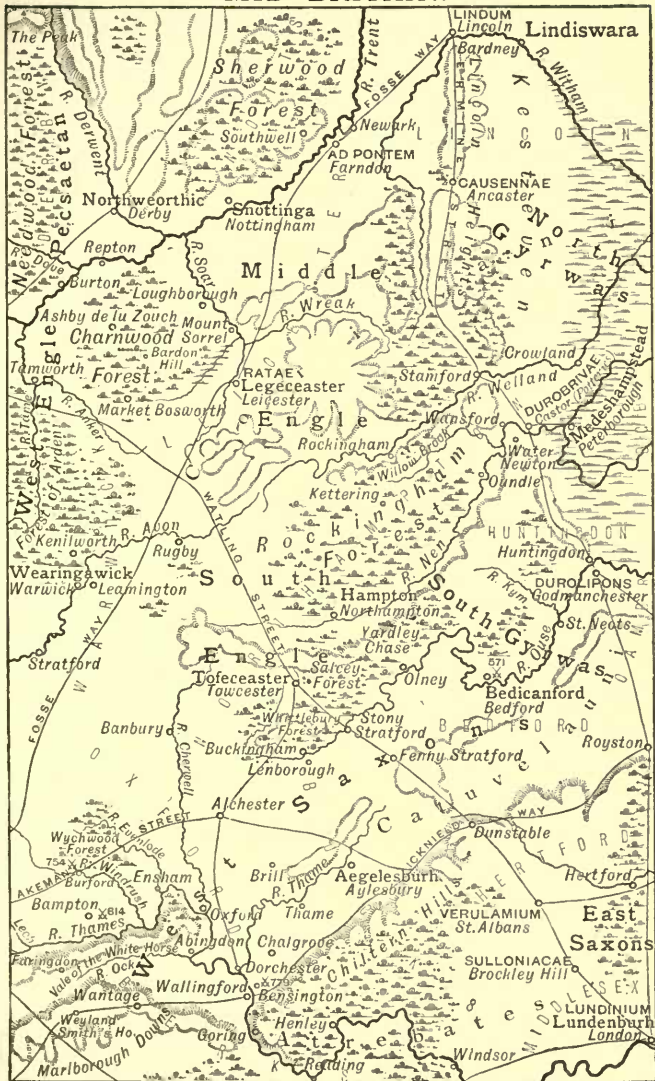
c. 500-
c. 570.

CHAP. II.
 Conquests
 of the
 Engle.
 c. 500-
 c. 570.
 Attack on
 the Trent
 Valley.

of the river however, that settlement was most possible, as it was here that the Trent basin was first accessible to the new settlers. While the bulk of the Lindiswara were slowly pushing their way through the fastnesses of Kesteven to their southern border on the Witham and at Stamford, smaller bodies may well have been descending into the valley of the Trent. From Lindum indeed one of the great lines of British communication led straight into this district. The Fosse Road, as it crossed Britain from Ilchester to Lincoln, following for the most part the northern slope of the oolitic range, struck by Leicester through the broken country to the south of the Trent before it climbed again to the upland at Lindum. If they marched by this road from their uplands the Lindiswara would touch the river at Farndon, a village not far from the later Newark, and the name of the station which occupied this site¹ (Ad Pontem or Bridge-road) shows that a bridge here led into the districts across it. In this quarter, however, there was little to be won. On the rising ground that formed the outskirts of the Peak, along a line of some twenty miles from our Nottingham to Worksop, vast masses of oak and birch, broken by barren reaches of heather, formed the mighty Sherwood, whose relics may still be

¹ "Ad Pontem" and the Tiowulfing-ceaster which succeeded it (Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 16) have been identified with Newark, Southwell, and other places. It seems certainly to be Farndon.

MID BRITAIN.



same scale as South Britain.

Walker & Bontall sc.

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 of the
 Engle.
 c. 500-
 c. 570.

seen in the woods of Welbeck, or Thoresby, or Clumber, and whose memory lingers in the tale of Robin Hood.¹ Between forest and river lay but a thin strip of open clay land, with lifts of soft sandstone here and there along the banks of the Trent; and on the slopes of one of these lifts, whose face had been long ago pierced with the cave-dwellings of primæval man, the house of the Snotingas fixed a home which has grown into our Nottingham. But the main settlement of the conquerors along the lower Trent must have been in the little dales that break the picturesque wold country that lies to the south of the river, and through which they pushed along its course as far as its junction with the Soar.

Rate.

Here, however, their course may have been barred for a while. Behind the lower course of the Soar from the neighbourhood of Leicester by the craggy hills of Mount Sorrell, and past Loughborough to the steep rise of Castle Donington beside the Trent, lay the outliers of Charnwood, a rugged tract of granite peaks and dark woodlands that reached westwards as far as Ashby-de-la-Zouch, a tract where—as the later legend of the country-side ran—“a squirrel might hop for miles from tree to tree, and a man journey in summer time from Barden Hill to Beaumanoir without once seeing the sun.” Only a few scattered oaks

¹ The skirts of Sherwood came down to the very north of Southwell in the valley of the Trent.

survive of the forest where the Prior of Alverscroft hunted in later days with hawk and hound, or where Ascham found Lady Jane Grey busy with her Plato, but much of the region is still a wild and lonely one, and recalls the great fastness whose front may have held the Engle¹ at bay. But if their advance across the lower Soar was barred, the Fosse Road by which they had descended from the Lincoln heights furnished an easy road to a richer spoil. Bending southward from the line of the Trent, it passed over the wolds to a point where the little Wreak joins the Soar, and then struck along the Soar to Rataë. Rataë, the predecessor of our Leicester,² seems to have been the largest and most important town in Mid-Britain. Fragments of columns and capitals, wine-jars and brooches, and mosaic pavements from villas which stood without its gates, are all that is left nowadays of its glories, though the basement of a temple of Janus was still recognized there in the twelfth century,³ and a big piece of ruined masonry may preserve the memory of the wall that yielded to the English onset. When its capture was over, the site of the town lay lonely

¹ This is, however, a mere inference from the border of Nottinghamshire in this quarter, and the physical character of the country beyond it.

² For Rataë, see Thompson's "English Municipal History," p. 32, and his "Handbook to Leicester." A large number of Roman remains are preserved in its museum.

³ By Geoffrey of Monmouth (Hist. Brit. ii. c. 14) who gives other remains.

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Engle.

c. 500.
c. 570.

and deserted in the midst of the woodlands through which the Soar even in the Middle Ages still wound its way to the Trent; and the only trace of its older life lingers on in the name of Leicester,¹ which clung to its ruins and passed to the town that rose among them as well as to the shire which represents the settlement of its conquerors.

The Gyrwas.

The winning of the triangular space of rock and woodland which stretched from Ashby to the Trent was probably the latest work of the Middle-English, as the men of our Leicestershire and perhaps our Nottinghamshire came to be called,² but we cannot follow them as they spread over the surface of their new territory, as they pushed along the valley of the Wreak, over the wolds towards Belvoir, or across the marshes of the Nar to the fields of Market Bosworth, or by the upper Soar, here shrunk to a brook, from Ratae along the Fosse Road to the borders of the great forest of Arden. Arden was a barrier which no doubt brought the invaders for a while to a standstill. But along the upper Soar they would push easily to the slopes of the uplands which lay to the south

¹ "Legoracensis civitas" (Stubbs and Haddan, "Councils," iii. 129) in eighth century: Lege-ceaster in tenth.

² Beda gives together "Orientales Angli, Mediterranei Angli, Merci, tota Nordanhymbrorum progenies," as the Engle peoples of Mid-Britain (H. E. i. 15), "Middle-Angli, id est, Mediterranei Angli" (ib. iii. 21). With Diuna began the Bishoprick of the Middle-Engle (ib.) as of the Mercians and Lindiswara. When the large sees were parted by Theodore, Leicester became the seat of that of the Middle-English.

of them, and where other Engle conquerors were probably already at work. For difficult as were the fastnesses of the Wash, the Gyrwas or Fen-folk must by this time have struggled through them to sack the towns which lay along the course of the road that marked its western edge. Of these towns the northernmost seems to have occupied the site of our Ancaster, amid whose "great square stones of old buildings" and "great vaultes" the ploughshare, as late as the days of the Tudors, disclosed Roman sepulchres and Roman coins.¹ South of this, on a site marked by the village of Caistor on the Nen stood Durobrivæ, the centre of a district covered with potteries, whose kilns were dotted over the country for twenty miles round. Hundreds of potters were employed in the manufacture of its wares; and the hunting-scenes, the scenes of boar-spearing and stag-chasing which they have graven on the surface of their work, lift for us a corner of the veil that shrouds the life of Roman Britain.² It must have been the North-Gyrwas, as their country included in later days its neighbour Peterborough,³ who pushed up the Nen to the conquest of Duro-

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of the
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c. 570.

¹ Leland, "Itinerary," i. 28, 29. Archdeacon Trollope has examined the site, etc., of Ancaster in Archæol. Journ. vol. xxvii. 1.

² For Durobrivæ, see Wright, "Celt, Roman, and Saxon," pp. 263, 264, and a paper by Archdeacon Trollope, Archæol. Journ. vol. xxx. 127. Mr. Artis has given plates of the remains in his "Durobrivæ Illustrated."

³ Bæda, H. E., lib. iv. c. 6.

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 Conquests
 of the
 Engle.
 c. 500-
 c. 570.

brivæ. Meanwhile the South-Gyrwas were at work along the line of the Ouse and the Cam, where Durolipons, near the present Huntingdon, but on the other side of the river, guarded a bridge over the Ouse, and where some miles to the south-east the country was commanded by the town of Camboritum, whose site in later days became the site of Cambridge.¹ The place was probably of importance; but so utter was its destruction that even in Bæda's day nothing was left but a few heaps of ruined stone from which the nuns of Ely fetched a sculptured sarcophagus of marble when they sought a tomb for their abbess Æthelthryth.²

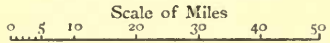
Masters of the road along the borders of the Wash, the Gyrwas would naturally be drawn forward to the upland which juts from the westward into its waters, the upland of Northamptonshire. In this direction however it was difficult of access. The undulating reach of grassy meadows, broken by thick hedgerows or copses, or tree-crowned knolls, and dotted everywhere with oak or elm, which we see in the shire of to-day, was in

¹ Even after its break up into shire land the oneness of the South-Gyrwan country was recognised in the fact that there was (at least in Camden's time) but one high sheriff for the whole area. "He is chosen out of Cambridgeshire one year, out of the Isle of Ely the second, and the third out of Huntingdonshire."—Camden's "Britannia," 1753, i. 502.

² Bæda, II. E. iv. c. 19. "Venerunt ad civitatulam quandam desolatam . . . quæ linguâ Anglorum Granta-cæster vocatur; et mox invenerunt juxta muros civitatis locellum de marmore albo pulcherrime factum, operculo quoque similis lapidis aptissime tectum."

The
 Engle in
 Northamp-
 tonshire.

EAST BRITAIN.



<i>British Names</i>	ICENI
<i>Roman Names</i>	LINDUM
<i>English Names</i>	Bedicanford
<i>Modern Names</i>	Lincoln



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 of the
 Engle.
 c. 500-
 c. 570.

the close of the sixth century little more than a vast woodland. Yardley Chase and the Forests of Selsey and Whittlebury are but dwindled representatives of a long barrier of copse and thicket that stretched along its south-eastern slopes, and amidst whose fastnesses lay the town which is represented by our Towcester. Even as late as the Middle Ages the western half of its area, from the edge of the Fens as far inland as Rockingham and Kettering, was still one of the largest forests of the island; and in earlier days this forest had stretched yet further towards the Nen.¹ It was through this huge woodland that the Engle from the Wash would have to struggle as they mounted the upland; and their progress must have been a slow one. Their fellow invaders from the valley of the Soar had an easier task. Along the headwaters of the Nen the upland became clearer: and though fragments of woodland such as the oak-woods that lingered on around Althorpe and Holmby linked Rockingham with the vaster forest of Arden, and thus carried on the forest line across central Britain from the Severn to the Wash, yet open spaces remained for settlement and communication.² It was across this clearer ground that the

¹ For Rockingham and its forest, see a paper by Mr. G. T. Clark, *Archæol. Journal*, vol. xxxv. p. 209.

² By Elizabeth's day sheep-farming, for which this district was renowned, had made this part of the shire "a great open pasture" as now. But the woodlands were still thick about Towcester and Rockingham. (Camden, "*Britannia*," ed. 1753, vol. i. p. 511.)

Watling Street struck after it had mounted from Stony-Stratford and emerged from the woods of Whittlebury; and here it was that the bulk of the new settlers raised their homes around the "home-town" of their tribe, the Hampton which was known in after days as Northampton to distinguish it from the South Hampton beside the Solent.

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 of the
 Engle.
 c. 500-
 c. 570.

While Engle bands were thus pushing up the Soar to Ratae and the upland which formed the southern brink of the Trent-basin, others must have been advancing along the great river beyond the bounds of the Middle-English to near its junction with the Tame. As they struck to the north up the valleys of the Derwent and the Dove into the moorlands of the Peak, these seem to have become known as the Pec-sætan, but their settlement in what was the later Derbyshire would necessarily be a scanty and unimportant one. Of far greater importance was the advance of their fellows to the west. Spreading along the quiet open meadows beside the Tame, the invaders as they fixed their "worth" of Tamworth on a little rise above its waters at their union with the Anker, saw the dark and barren moorlands of Cannock Chase stretching like a barrier across their path. Lichfield, "the field of the dead," may, as the local tradition ran, mark the place of some fight that left them masters of the ground beneath its slopes; but the Chase itself was impassable. At either

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 Engle.

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 of the
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end of it, however, a narrow gap gave access to the country in its rear. Between its northern extremity and the Needwood which lay thick along the Trent, the space along the channel of the great river was widened by the little valley of the Sow. Between its southern end and the dark edge of Arden, which then ran to the north of our Walsall and Wolverhampton, interposed a like gap of open country through which the Watling Street passed on its way to the Severn. By both of these openings the West-Engle, as this folk of conquerors at first called itself, pushed into the open tract between Cannock and the low line of moorlands thrown down from the heights of Mole Cop in the north, which marks the water-parting between the basins of the Severn and of the Trent. Stafford, the "Stone-ford," marks their passage over the Sow to the head-waters of the great river which had led them through the heart of central Britain, though the woods thrown out from Needwood across the district of Trentham must have long hindered them from penetrating to its northern founts. Here however they were brought for a while to a stand; for that these moorlands long remained a march or border-land between Engle and Welshman we see from the name by which the West-English became more commonly known, the Mercians, or the Men of the March.¹

¹ The date of the conquest of Mercia can only be a matter of inference, as we have no record of any part of the winning of

central Britain. Florence of Worcester, ed. Thorpe (vol. i. 264), says, "post initium regni Cantuariorum principium existit regni Merciorum," which tells us nothing; but if Penda was (E. Chron. a. 626) fifty when he began his reign in 626 (Bæda, ii. 20, seems to put this in 633), he was born about 576, when we may take it his people were already on the upper Trent. This squares with Huntingdon's statement, "Regnum Merce incipit, quod Crida ut ex scriptis conijcere possumus primus obtinuit" (Hist. Angl. ed. Arnold, p. 53), a fact which he inserts between Ceawlin's overthrow at Fethanlea in 584 and his death in 593. Crida, or Creoda, was Penda's grandfather; "Penda was the son of Pybba, Pybba of Creoda" (Engl. Chron. a. 626). The setting up of a king would no doubt follow here as elsewhere a period of conquest under Ealdormen which would carry us back to near the middle of the century for the first attack on the head-waters of the Trent. The conquests of the Middle-Engle would of course precede those of the Mercians. We may gather from the limits of the Bishopricks of the Mercians that the *Pec-sætan* of our Derbyshire were only a part of these West-Engle.

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—
**Conquests
 of the
 Engle.**
 —

c. 500-
 c. 570.

CHAPTER III

CONQUESTS OF THE SAXONS

c. 500—577

The West-
Saxons.

WITH the settlement of the Mercians the work of the Engle in central and northern Britain was done. But we have still to follow the work of the conquerors who through the same memorable years had been making themselves masters of the south. While the Engle had been winning one flank of the Saxon Shore, the Saxons were as slowly winning an even more important district on its other flank.¹ To westward of the strip of coast between the Andredsweald and the sea which had been won by the war-bands of Ælla, the alluvial flat whose inlets had drawn the South-Saxons to their landing in Chichester Water broadened into a wider tract around a greater estuary, that of the Southampton Water, as it strikes inland from the sea-channels of the Solent and Spithead. This

¹ From this point we are again on distinctly historic ground, as the Chronicle records every step in the conquest of Wessex.

opening in the coast was already recognized as of both military and commercial importance. It was the one break in the long line of forests which, whether by the fastnesses of the Andredsweald or by the hardly less formidable fastnesses of our Dorset, stretched like a natural barrier along the whole southern coast of Britain; for though woodlands lay even here along the shore, it was in a thin line broken by the estuary and by the channels of its tributaries, and cleft by the roads that run from Winchester to Porchester or along the valley of the Itchen.¹ By either estuary or roads it was easy to reach the upland of the Gwent, and to strike across it into the very heart of Britain. The importance of such a point was shown by the resolute resistance of its defenders; and the Saxons who attacked it during the latter years of the fifth century seem to have failed to make any permanent settlement along the coast. The descents of their leaders, Cerdic and Cynric, in 495² at the mouth of the Itchen, and a fresh descent on Porchester in 501,³ can have been little more than plunder raids; and though in 508⁴ a far more serious conflict ended in the fall of five

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¹ For these woodlands, see Guest, *Origines Celticæ*, ii. 151-2. I again follow mainly the guidance of this paper, as far as the West-Saxon conquests are concerned, up to the battle of Bedford.

² E. Chron. a. 495.

³ E. Chron. a. 501.

⁴ E. Chron. a. 508, and Huntingdon, H. A. ed. Arnold, p. 46, who adds that the West-Sexe were aided here by the Kentish men and South-Sexe.

CHAP. III. thousand Britons and their chief, it was not till
 Conquests of the Saxons. 514 that the tribe whose older name seems to have
 c. 500-577. been that of the Gewissas, but who were to be
 more widely known as the West-Saxons, actually
 landed with a view to definite conquest.¹

Conquest of Hampshire and Isle of Wight. Pushing up the Itchen to the plunder of Winchester, they must have been already masters of the downs around it when they turned to clear the Britons from the forests in their rear; for a fight at Charford on the Lower Avon in 519 seems to mark the close of a conflict in which the provincials were driven from the woodlands whose shrunken remains meet us in the New Forest, and in which the whole district between the Andredsweald and the Lower Avon was secured for English holding.² The success at Charford was followed by the political organization of the conquerors; and Cerdic and Cynric became kings of the West-Saxons.³ Here, however, their success came to an end. Across Avon the forest belt again thickened into a barrier that held the invaders at bay; for when in the following year, 520, they clove their way through it to the valley of the Frome, eager perhaps for the sack of a city whose site is marked by our Dorchester, they were met by the Britons

¹ E. Chron. a. 514. My inferences from the entries in the Chronicle are here somewhat different from those of Dr. Guest, nor have I felt justified in adopting his ingenious theory as to the struggle of 508. See Guest, *Origines Celticae*, ii. 181, etc.

² E. Chron. a. 519; Æthelweard, a. 519.

³ E. Chron. a. 519.

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at Badbury or Mount Badon,¹ and thrown back in what after events show to have been a crushing defeat. The border-line of our Hampshire to the west still marks the point at which the progress of the Gewissas was arrested by this overthrow;² and how severe was the check is shown by the long cessation of any advance in this quarter. We hear only of a single battle of the West-Sexe³ during the rest of the reign of Cerdic; while the Jutes who had aided in his descents, and who had struck up the Meon to a clearing along its course where the villages of Meon Stoke and West and East Meon still preserve a memory of their settlement of the Meonwara,⁴ turned to the conquest of the island that lay off the Solent. In 530 Cerdic and Cynric subdued the Isle of Wight, but it was in the interest not of their own people, but of its

¹ Gildas, Hist. sec. 26. For the identification of this battle with that of Mount Badon, and of its site with Badbury in Dorsetshire, see Guest, *Origines Celticæ*, ii. 186, etc.

² The position of Sorbiodunum, which was still in British hands, gives at least one firm standpoint in the question of West-Saxon boundaries at this time. The limits which Guest assigns them (*Origines Celticæ*, ii. 190, etc.) to north and east—reaching as far as Cherwell and Englefield—seem to me inconsistent with their later campaigns; in fact, I can hardly doubt that Hampshire, as a whole, represents the West-Saxon kingdom after 520.

³ English Chron. a. 527.

⁴ Bede, H. E. i. 15. "De Jutarum origine sunt Cantuarii et Vectuarii, hoc est, ea gens quæ Vectam tenet insulam, et ea quæ usque hodie in provincia occidentalium Saxonum Jutarum natio nominatur, posita contra ipsam insulam Vectam." Politically the Meonwara went with the Isle of Wight, and not with Wessex. See Wulfhere's grant to Ædilwalch; *Bæda*, H. E. iv. 13.

allies, for the new settlers of the island, the Wiht-gara, whose name survives in their town of Carisbrook or Wiht-gara-burh, were not West-Sexe but Jutes.¹ Small as it was, the conquest was a memorable one ; for with it ended for centuries the work of the Jutes in Britain. Causes which are hidden from us must have diverted their energies elsewhere ; the winning of Britain was left to the Saxon and the Engle ; and it was not till Britain was won that the Jutes returned to dispute it with their old allies under the name of the Danes.²

But the conquest of the isle had hardly less significance for the West-Sexe themselves. If they turned to the sea, it was that landwards all progress seemed denied them. Not only had the woodlands of the coast proved impassable, but the invaders of the Gwent found barriers almost as strong on every side. Higher up on their western border the fortress of Sorbiodunum, or Old Sarum, guarded the valley of the Avon and blocked the way to Salisbury Plain, while to eastward of the Gwent ran the thickets of the Andredsweald, and beneath its northern escarpment stretched a forest which for centuries to come filled the valley of the Kennet. The strength of these natural barriers was doubled by strongholds which furnished the Britons with bases for defensive operations as well as with supplies of fighting men, for

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Pause of
West-
Saxons.

¹ See passage quoted above. Bæda, H. E. i. 12.

² Stubbs, Const. Hist. i. 46.

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while Silchester or Calleva barred the march of the Gewissas across the tract between the Andredswald and the Thames, Cunetio, on the site of our Marlborough, held the downs to the north, and guarded the road that led from Winchester to the Severn valley. How formidable these obstacles were we see from the long inaction of the West-Saxons. While the Engle in the north were slowly fighting their way across Yorkshire or Lincolnshire, their rivals in the south lay quiet for thirty years within the limits of our Hampshire. From the position indeed of their central "tun" of Hampton, our Southampton, it would seem as if their main settlement was still on the coast, and as if the ruins of Winchester were left silent and deserted in the upper downs.

Sorbio-
dunum.

What broke this inaction, whether the Britons had grown weaker, or whether fresh reinforcements had strengthened their opponents, we do not know. We hear only that Cynric, whom Cerdic's death left King of the West-Saxons, again took up the work of invasion in 552 by a fresh advance on the west.¹ Winchester was the meeting-point of five Roman roads; and of these one struck directly westward, along the northern skirts of the woodlands that filled the space between the lower Itchen and the mid-valley of the Avon, to the fortress of Old Sarum.² Celt and Roman alike

¹ E. Chron. a. 552.² See map in Guest; *Origines Celticæ*, ii. 147.

had seen the military value of the height from which the eye sweeps nowadays over the grassy meadows of the Avon to the arrowy spire of Salisbury ; and admirable as the position was in itself, it had been strengthened at a vast cost of labour. The camp on the summit of the knoll was girt in by a trench hewn so deeply in the chalk that from the inner side of it the white face of the rampart rose a hundred feet high, while strong outworks protected the approaches to the fortress from the west and from the east.¹ Arms must have been useless against such a stronghold as this ; and, though the Britons were “ put to flight ” before its investment, the reduction of *Sorbiodunum* was probably due rather to famine or want of water than to the sword.

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But its fall brought with it the easy winning of the district which it guarded, as well as the downs on whose edge stood the strange monument, then as now an object of wonder, to which the conquerors as they marched beside its mystic circle gave the name of the Hanging Stones, Stonehenge. The *Gewissas* passed over the Stratford, or paved ford by which the road they had followed from Winchester passed the river, to the westernmost reaches of the *Gwent*, the district we now know as Salisbury Plain. To the south of them as they marched, behind the lower Avon and its

Conquest
of Wiltshire.

¹ G. T. Clark, “ Earthworks of the Wiltshire Avon,” *Archæol. Journ.* xxxii. 290.

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little affluent of the Nadder, a broken and woodland country whose memory lingers in Cranbourne Chase screened the later Dorsetshire from their arms ;¹ but in their front the open downs offered no line of defence, and the Gewissas could push along the road from Old Sarum unhindered till they reached the steep slope down which the upland fell into the valley of the Frome. How roughly their march was checked at this point by the dense forests which filled the Frome valley we see from the fact that these woodlands remained in British hands for more than a hundred years ; and the significant name of "Mere" preserves for us the memory of the border-bound which the Gewissas were forced to draw along the western steeps of their new conquest. The conquerors turned back to settle in the land they had won, in the river valleys which scored the surface of the downs, in the tiny bends and grassy nooks of the vale of Avon, or in the meadows along the course of its affluent, the Wil or Wiley. It was probably in the last that the main body of the invaders fixed their home, for it was the Wiley, and the little township, or Wil-ton, which rose beside it, which gave them from this time their new name of Wilsætas. From this time, indeed, the Gewissas, or West-Saxons, felt the need of local names for the

¹ The name of "Britford," which still clings to a passage over the Avon in this quarter, may mark a point in the new border-line where the Briton still faced his foe.

peoples into which conquest broke them as they pushed over the country. But the character of these names shows the looseness of the bonds that held such "folks" together. Each knew itself simply as a group of "sætan" or "settlers" in the land it had won, Wil-sætan in the lands about the Wiley, Dor-sætan in the forest track through which wound the "dwr" or dark water of the Frome, Somer-sætan in the district yet more to the west.

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But there was little to detain Cynric in the tiny vales and bare reaches of upland which his arms had as yet given him; and in 556, only four years after the fall of Old Sarum, he pushed forward again along the road that led from Winchester north-westward in the direction of Cirencester and the Severn. Descending the deep escarpment which forms the northern face of the Hampshire downs, he threaded his way through the woodlands of the vale of Pewsey, whose relics survive in the Forest of Savernake, and again mounted the slopes on the further side of them. Here he made himself master of the town of Cunetio and of the upland which lay about it by a victory on the very brink of the downs at Barbury Hill.¹ The ground, however, of which he thus became lord was far from affording any obstacle to further advance; on

Cynric's
 advance.

¹ "Byran-byrig," E. Chron. a. 556; Guest, *Origines Celticae*, ii. 193. Huntingdon, H. A. ed. Arnold, p. 51, gives large details of this battle, but we do not know his authority for them.

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the contrary, its very character seemed to draw the Gewissas onward to new aggressions. The Marlborough Downs are in fact the starting-point from which the second and greatest of its chalk-ranges runs across Southern Britain. The upland trends to the north-east under the name of the Ilsley Downs till it reaches a gap through which the Thames strikes southward to its lower river-valley; then rising again in the Chilterns, it broadens at last into the Gwent in which the East-Anglians had found a home. In its earlier course this range naturally called Cynric's men to a fresh advance; for from the downs above Marlborough the high ground runs on without a break to the course of the Thames. This tract, however, like that which they had traversed in the Gwent, must have been a scantily-peopled one; and its invaders would turn with eagerness to the more tempting district which lay in the lower ground on either side of it. The northern face of the downs consists of a line of steep cliffs, looking out over a vale through which the stream of the Ock pours its waters into the Thames. On the face of this escarpment the traveller still sees, drawn white against the scanty turf, the gigantic form of a horse which gives the Vale of White Horse its name, and which tradition looks on as a work of the conquering Gewissas. Another monument of their winning of this district lingers in the rude stones called Weyland Smith's House, a cromlech of primæval times where the

Saxons found a dwelling-place for the weird legend of a hero-smith which they brought with them from their German homeland.

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Conquest of
Berkshire.

The White Horse glimmers over a broad and fertile region, whose local names recall for us the settlement of the conquerors in hamlets that have grown into quiet little towns like Wantage, the future birthplace of Ælfred, or in homesteads that crowned the low rises or "duns" which overlooked the valley, such as the dun where the Farrings planted their Farringdon, or another dun at the confluence of the Ock and the Thames, where the West-Saxon Abba chose the site for a dwelling-place which grew in later days into our Abingdon. On the south the downs fell in gentler slopes to the vale of the Kennet, whose silvery stream ran through masses of woodland, past the ford at Hungerford and the "new burh" of the conquerors which survives in Newbury, to the low and swampy meadows where it meets the Thames, as that river bursts from its cleft through the chalk-range to open out into its lower valley. In these meadows the house of the Readings planted a settlement which has grown into the busy town that preserves their name. Still further to the east the invaders pushed their way into the tangled woodland that stretched along the low clay flats which bordered the southern bank of the Thames, and where the predominance of the box, or bearroc, may have given in after days its name of "Bearroeshire" or

CHAP. III. Berkshire to the whole tract of valley and down
 Conquests of the Saxons. which this fresh advance added to the dominions
 of the West-Saxons.¹

c. 500-577. With its conquest the winning of the southern
 The Valley of the Thames. uplands was complete. And with the winning of
 these uplands the whole island lay open to the
 Gewissas; for the Andredsweald, which had held
 back the invader for half a century, was turned as
 soon as the West-Saxons stood masters of the
 southern Gwent, and their country now jutted
 forward like a huge bastion into the heart of
 unconquered Britain. Only on one side were the
 obstacles in their way still serious, where the
 woods of Dorsetshire, with the thick wedge of
 forest which blocked the valley of the Frome
 beneath the Wiltshire downs, were for long years
 to hold any western advance at bay. But else-
 where the land was open to their attack. On the
 north-west easy slopes led to the crest of the
 Cotswolds, from whence the Severn valley lay
 before them for their prey. On the north their
 march would find no natural obstacles as it passed
 up the Cherwell valley to penetrate either to the
 central plain of Britain or to the Wash. Above
 all, to the eastward opened before them the valley
 of the Thames. From its springs near the crest
 of the Cotswolds the river falls quietly to the low
 ground beneath the Marlborough Downs, and then

¹ For these woodlands see Guest's *Origines Celtiæ*, ii. 152.
 The Kennet valley was not disafforested till the time of Henry III.

turns abruptly to the south to hew a channel through the line of chalk uplands, and thus part the Berkshire heights from the Chilterns. Once out of this narrow gorge it bends round the woodlands where the advanced guard of Cynric's men were feeling their way into the fastnesses about Windsor, and rolling in a slower and larger current eastward through the wide valley that lies between the North Downs and the East-Anglian heights, after a course of two hundred miles it reaches its estuary and the sea.

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No road can have seemed so tempting to the earlier invaders as this water-road of the Thames, leading as it did straight from the Channel to the heart of Britain through an open and fruitful country; and it was by this road that their advance seemed destined to be made when they settled on either side of its estuary in Essex and in Kent. But a century had passed since these settlements, and the Thames valley still remained untouched. Tempting as the road seemed, indeed, no inlet into Britain was more effectually barred. On either side the river-mouth, at but little distance from the coast on which East-Saxon and Kentishman were encamped, long belts of woodland and fen stretched to the very brink of the Thames. On the south of it the fastnesses of the Weald found their line of defence prolonged by huge swamps that stretched to the river, and whose memory is still preserved by the local names as by the local

Its defences.

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floods of Rotherhithe and Bermondsey. To the north as formidable a line of defence presented itself in the tangled forest whose last relics survive in the woods of Epping and in the name of Hainault, and this barrier of woodland was backed by the swamps of the lower Lea to the rear of it. The one line of advance in fact open to an invader was the course of the Thames itself, and the course of the Thames was blocked by the fortress of London.

The site of
 London.

The commercial greatness of London has made men forget its military importance, but from the first moment of its history till late into the Middle Ages London was one of the strongest of our fortresses. Its site, indeed, must have been dictated, like that of most early cities, by the advantages which it presented as well for defence as for trade.¹ It stood at the one point by which either merchant or invader could penetrate from the estuary into the valley of the Thames; and in its earlier days, before the great changes wrought by the embankment of the Romans, this was also the first point at which any rising ground for the site of such a town presented itself on either shore of the river. Nowhere has the hand of man moulded ground into shapes more strangely contrasted with its natural form than on the site of

¹ Rev. W. J. Loftie, "London before the Houses," *Macmillan's Magazine*, vol. xxxiv. p. 356. To this paper we may add Dr. Guest's remarks on ancient Middlesex in his "Aulus Plantius," *Origines Celtiæ*, ii. 381. See too *Quarterly Review*, July 1880, "Middlesex."

London. Even as late as the time of Cæsar the soil which a large part of it covers can have been little but a vast morass. Below Fulham the river stretched at high tide over the ground that lies on either side of its present channel from the rises of Kensington and Hyde Park to the opposite shores of Peckham and Camberwell. All Pimlico and Westminster to the north, to the south all Battersea and Lambeth, all Newington and Kennington, all Bermondsey and Rotherhithe, formed a vast lagoon, broken only by little rises which became the "eyes" and "hithes," the "islands" and "landing-rises," of later settlements. Yet lower down to the eastward the swamp widened as the Lea poured its waters into the Thames in an estuary of its own, an estuary which ran far to the north over as wide an expanse of marsh and fen, while at its mouth it stretched its tidal waters over the mud flats which have been turned by embankment into the Isle of Dogs.¹ Near the point where the two rivers meet, a traveller who

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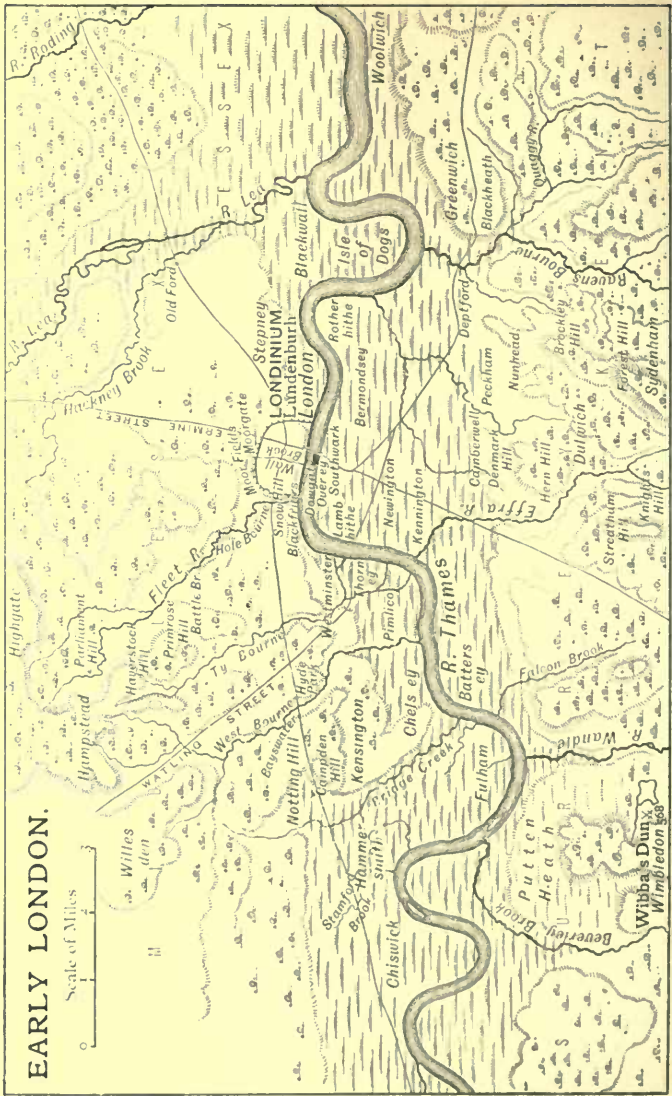
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¹ Gnest, "Aulus Plautius," *Origines Celticæ*, ii. 403. "When the Romans under Aulus Plautius came down the Watling Street to the neighbourhood of London, they saw before them a wide expanse of marsh and mud bank, which twice every day assumed the character of an estuary sufficiently large to excuse, if not to justify, the statement of Dion, that the river there emptied itself into the ocean. No dykes then retained the water within certain limits. One arm of this great wash stretched northward up the valley of the Lea, and the other westward up the valley of the Thames." "The name of London refers directly to the marshes, though I cannot here enter on a philological argument to prove the fact" (p. 405).

EARLY LONDON.

Scale of Miles
0 1 2 3 4



was mounting the Thames from the sea saw the first dry land to which his bark could steer. The spot was in fact the extremity of a low line of rising ground which was thrown out from the heights of Hampstead that border the river valley to the north, and which passed over the sites of our Hyde Park and Holborn to thrust itself on the east into the great morass. This eastern portion of it, however, was severed from the rest of the rise by the deep gorge of a stream that fell from the northern hills, the stream of the Fleet, whose waters, long since lost in London sewers, ran in earlier days between steep banks—banks that still leave their impress in the local levels, and in local names like Snow Hill—to the Thames at Blackfriars.

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The rise or “dun” that stretched from this tidal channel of the Fleet to the spot now marked by the Tower, and which was destined to become the site of London, rose at its highest some fifty feet above the level of the tide, and was broken into two parts by a ravine through which ran the stream which has since been known as the Wallbrook. Such a position was admirably adapted for defence; it was indeed almost impregnable. Sheltered to east and south by the lagoons of the Lea and the Thames, guarded to westward by the deep cleft of the Fleet, it saw stretching along its northern border the broad fen whose name has survived in our modern Moorgate. Nor, as the

Not a
 British
 Town.

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first point at which merchants could land from the great river, was the spot less adapted for trade. But it was long before the trader found dwelling on its soil. Old as it is, London is far from being one of the oldest of British cities ; till the coming of the Romans, indeed, the loneliness of its site seems to have been unbroken by any settlement whatever. The "dun" was in fact the centre of a vast wilderness. Beyond the marshes to the east lay the forest tract of southern Essex. Across the lagoon to the south rose the woodlands of Sydenham and Forest Hill, themselves but advance guards of the fastnesses of the Weald. To the north the heights of Highgate and Hampstead were crowned with forest-masses, through which the boar and the wild ox wandered without fear of man down to the days of the Plantagenets. Even the open country to the west was but a waste. It seems to have formed the border-land between two British tribes who dwelt in Hertford and in Essex, and its barren clays were given over to solitude by the usages of primæval war.¹

With the coming of the Roman, however, this

¹ Guest, "Aulus Plautius," *Origines Celticæ*, ii. 391: "merely a march of the Catuvellauni, a common through which ran a wide trackway, but in which was neither town, village, nor inhabited house. No doubt the Catuvellauni fed their cattle in the march, and there may have been shealings here to shelter their herdsmen." "I have little doubt that between Brockley Hill and the Thames all was wilderness from the Lea to the Brent."

solitude passed away.¹ We know nothing of the settlement of the town; but its advantages as the first landing-place along the Thames secured for it at once the command of all trading intercourse with Gaul, and through Gaul with the Empire at large.² So rapid was its growth that only a few years after the landing of Claudius London had risen into a flourishing port, the massacre of whose foreign traders was the darkest blot on the British rising under Boadicea.³ But the town soon re-

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Roman
London.

¹ Guest ("Aulus Plautius," *Origines Celticae*, ii. 405) suggests the Roman origin of London. "When in the autumn of 43 Aulus Plantius drew the lines of circumvallation round his camp, I believe he founded the present metropolis of Britain. The notion entertained by some antiquaries, that a British town preceded the Roman camp, has no foundation to rest upon, and is inconsistent with all we know of the early geography of this part of Britain." Much has been made of its name, but "Llyn-dyn," or whatever the Celtic form may be, is as likely to be the designation of a spot as of a town on it. An almost conclusive proof, however, that no such town existed west of the Fleet may be drawn from the line of the old British road from Kent (the predecessor of the Watling Street), which, instead of crossing the river as in Roman and later times at the point marked by London Bridge, passed, according to Higden, to a point opposite Westminster, and crossing the river there struck north along the line of Park Lane and Edgware Road. (Loftie, "Roman London," *Archæol. Journ.* vol. xxxiv. p. 165.) Such a course is inconsistent with the existence of a town on the site of the later London; in fact, the rise of such a town is the best explanation of the later change in the line of this road, which brought about its passage by the bridge.

² As we have seen, vessels from Gaul simply crossed the Channel to Richborough, and avoided the circuit of the North Foreland by using the channel of the Wantsum, through which they passed by Reenulver into the Thames.

³ For "Roman London," we have numerous papers, especially in the *Archæologia*, by Mr. Wright, Sir William Tite, Mr. Taylor, Mr. Black, and Mr. Roach Smith, and a separate

CHAP. III. covered from the blow. If York became the
 Conquests official capital of the province, London formed its
 of the actual centre, for by one of the many advantages
 Saxons. of its site it was necessarily the point from which
 c. 500-577. the roads of the conquerors radiated over the
 island. Such a point would naturally have been
 found at Richborough, where the line of communi-
 cation with the body of the Empire passed the
 Channel at its narrowest part. But Kent, as we
 have seen, was shut in by barriers which made
 communication with the rest of the island im-
 practicable, save at the single spot where the
 road, thus drawn inland from Richborough, found
 a practicable passage over the Thames. And this
 spot was at London. For London was the lowest
 ground on the tidal waters of the river on which
 it was possible to build a bridge, and even before
 a bridge was built it was the lowest ground where
 passage could be gained by a ferry. But once
 over the river, the difficulty of divergence was
 removed, and it was thus that roads struck from
 London to every quarter of Britain.¹ As the
 meeting-point of these roads, the point of their
 contact with the lines of communication between

treatise by the last author on "The Antiquities of Roman London." See too Mr. Loftie's "Roman London" in *Archæological Journal*, vol. xxxiv. p. 164.

¹ Roads such as the Foss Road or the Icknield Way are of earlier than Roman date; and their direction was determined by very different social and political circumstances from those of Britain in the Roman times. (See Guest, "Anulus Plantius," *Origines Celticae*, ii. 400.)

the province and the Empire, as well as the natural port for the bulk of its trade, which then lay exclusively with the Mediterranean and the Channel, London could not fail to grow fast in population and wealth.

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c. 500-577.

From the traces of burial indeed, which we find over part of the ground, it seems almost certain that the earlier city was far from extending over the whole of the space embraced within the existing Roman walls. It is possible that Londinium at first only occupied the height to the eastward of the Wallbrook, which then ran in a deep channel to its little port at Dowgate, and that its northern bound was marked by a trench whose memory survives in the name of our "Langbourne" Ward; while the ground to the westward as far as the Fleet was still open and used for interments. But buildings soon rose over the ground outside these narrow bounds. We find traces of villas and pavements stretching over the earlier grave-grounds; and by the close of the third century at latest, London had spread over the whole area of the rise east of the Fleet between the Thames and the Moor. It was this London that was girt in by the massive walls which were probably raised by Theodosius,¹ when

Its Growth.

¹ The ease with which the Frankish soldiers, after the fall of Allectus, fell back on and plundered London suggests that it was then without defence. The reign of Valentinian seems the most probable date for raising walls after this time; and the coins found along its course point to the second half of the

CHAP. III. the inroads of the Picts and the descents of the
 Conquests of the Saxons. Saxons first made walls necessary for the security
 of towns in Britain.

c. 500-577. But the city spread even beyond these wide
 Its Importance. bounds. Houses of citizens studded the country
 around its walls, and bordered the roads which

struck westward along the "hollow bourne" or
 Holborn, and northward along our Gracechurch
 Street. Outside the walls too lay a ring of burial-
 places at Shoreditch and elsewhere; while a suburb
 rose across the river on the site of the present
 Southwark. One of the most laborious works of
 the Roman settlers was the embankment of the
 lower channels of the Thames and of the Lea; and
 it was on ground thus gained from the morass
 across the river at our Southwark that dwellings
 clustered whose number and wealth leave hardly a
 doubt that they were already linked by a bridge
 with the mother city.¹ Of London itself, how-
 ever, we know little. Tradition places a temple of
 Diana on the spot where the Christian missionaries

fourth century. There are signs too that the wall was raised
 in some haste, and under the pressure of urgent necessity; for
 it is carried over cemeteries and the sites of existing houses,
 covering even their encaustic pavements in its course; and
 fragments of building and sculpture are found worked into
 it.

¹ "When the foundations of the old bridge were taken up, a
 line of coins, ranging from the Republican period to Honorius,
 were found in the bed of the river. . . . The completeness of
 the series can only be accounted for on the supposition that a
 bridge, preceded perhaps by a rope or chain ferry, was very
 early thrown across the Thames."—Loftie's "Roman London,"
 Archaeol. Journ. xxxiv. p. 172.

raised in after time the Church of St. Paul, and here on this higher ground some statelier public buildings may have clustered round it. But the scarcity of stone and abundance of clay in its neighbourhood were fatal to any architectural pretensions; and from the character of its remains the town seems to have been little more than a mass of brick houses and red-tiled roofs, pierced with a network of the narrow alleys which passed for streets in the Roman world, and cleft throughout its area by two wider roads from the bridge. One of these led by a gate near our Bishopsgate to the northern road, the other by a line which is partly represented in our Cannon Street to Newgate and the west. But if it fell far beneath many of the British towns in its outer seeming, as it fell beneath York in official rank, London surpassed all in population and wealth. Middlesex possibly represents a district which depended on it in this earlier, as it certainly did in a later time; and the privileges of the chase, which its citizens enjoyed throughout the Middle Ages in the woodland that covered the heights of Hampstead and along the southern bank of the river as far as the Cray, may have been drawn from the rights of the Roman burghers.

In the downfall of the Imperial rule such a town would doubtless gain a virtual independence; but through the darkness of the time we catch only a passing glimpse of its life, when the Britons, after

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 of the
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 c. 500-577.

London
 and its
 invaders.

CHAP. III. their rout at Crayford, fled from the Jutes to find
Conquests of the shelter at "Lundenbyrg."¹ Its power, however,
Saxons. was seen in the arrest of the invaders as they
c. 500-577. neared its southern suburb ; for the western border
of Kent represents, no doubt, fairly enough the
point at which the Londoners were able to hold the
"Cant-wara" at bay on the edge of the morass
that stretched from Southwark to the Dulwich
hills. Hardly were these southern assailants
brought to a standstill when London must have
had to struggle against assailants on the northern
bank of the river. Here, however, the attack was
probably a fainter one. Not only was the line of
forest and marsh along the lower channel of the
Lea impenetrable, but the woodland and mud flats
of southern Essex offered little temptation to the
settlers who might have pressed forward in this
quarter. The energies of the East-Saxons were in
fact long drawn elsewhere ; for their settlements
lay mainly in the north of the district to which
they gave their name, where a clearer and more
fertile country offered them homes in the valleys
of the Colne and the Stour ; and even here their
numbers must have been too small to push inland,
for half a century seems to have elapsed after their
first settlement before they were strong enough to
advance from the coast into the interior of the
island.

When the time came for such an advance, it

¹ Engl. Chron. a. 457.

lay naturally up the river valleys in which they had settled; and these led through thinner woodland to a point in the downs where Saffron Walden still marks an open "dene" that broke the thickets of the waste or "Weald." Once on these downs the East-Saxons found themselves encamped on the central uplands of the line of chalk heights whose extremities had already been seized by their brethren in Berkshire and by the Engle in the Eastern Counties. Though the tract was traversed by the great road which ran across Mid-Britain from London to Chester, the road to which the English gave its later name of Watling Street, it was a wild and lonely region, whose woodlands, even in the days of the Norman kings, made travel through it a dangerous business.¹ At this time it probably formed the district of Verulamium, a town which stood near the site of the present St. Alban's. Verulamium was one of the oldest towns in Britain; and, in spite of the wild tract in which it stood, its position on the main road from London across Mid-Britain gave it a wealth and importance which are still witnessed by the traces of an amphitheatre, the extent of its walls, and the expanse of ruins from which the Abbey and Abbey Church of later days were mainly constructed. Since Christianity had become the religion of the Empire it had won celebrity as the scene of the martyrdom of a Christian soldier,

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Fall of
Veru-
lamium.

¹ Guest, "Four Roman Ways," *Origines Celticæ*, ii. 224.

CHAP. III. Alban, who was said to have suffered under
 Conquests of the Dioeletian, and whose church was a centre of
 Saxons. Christian devotion.¹ But neither its wealth nor
 c. 500-577. its sanctity saved it from the invaders. Its fall
 was complete; and for centuries to come the
 broken and charred remains of the town were left
 in solitude without inhabitants.²

Fall of
 London.

The fall of Verulamium and the settlement of its conquerors in the downs about it must have fallen on London as a presage of ruin. A hundred years had passed away since Hengest's men had fallen back baffled from its neighbourhood; and in the long interval its burghers may have counted themselves safe from attack. But year by year the circle of invasion had been closing round the city. The conquest of Kent had broken its communications with the Continent; and whatever trade might struggle from the southern coast through the Weald had been cut off by the conquest of Sussex. That of the Gwent about Winchester closed the road to the south-west; while the capture of Cunetio interrupted all communication

¹ Gildas, Hist. cap. 10; Bæda, H. E. i. c. 7.

² Our only guides to the date of the conquest of Hertfordshire are the date of the earlier conquest of Essex, which as we have seen can hardly have been long before A.D. 500, and that of the fall of Verulamium. That Verulamium had fallen before 560 is shown by the lament over its ruin in Gildas (Hist. sec. 10); but its fall can hardly have been much earlier. The bounds of the diocese of London, which represent the kingdom of Essex, show that the Hertfordshire men were part of the East-Saxons. The present shire of Hertford, however, is far from coinciding in its limits with those of the East-Saxon realm or diocese.

with the valley of the Severn and the rich country along its estuary. And now the occupation of Hertfordshire cut off the city from northern and central Britain, for it was over these chalk uplands that the Watling Street struck across the central plain to Chester and the north-west, and it was through Verulamium that travellers bent round the forest-block above London on their way to the north. Only along the Thames itself could London maintain any communication with what remained of Britain; and even this communication must have been threatened as the invaders crept down the slopes from the north through the woodland which crowned the rises of Hampstead and Highgate, or descended by the valleys of the Brent and the Colne on the tract which retains their name of Middle-Sexe. The settlers in this district, indeed, seem to have been unimportant; and the walls of the great city were still strong enough to defy any direct attack. But when once the invading force had closed fairly round it, London, like its fellow-towns, must have yielded to the stress of a long blockade. Although no record remains of its capture or surrender,¹ the course of events seems to give the date of its fall pretty clearly. It was certainly in English hands by the opening of the seventh century;² and its fall is

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¹ "Good reasons may be given for the belief that even London itself for a while lay desolate and uninhabited."—Guest, "Conquest of Severn Valley," *Origines Celticae*, ii. 311.

² In 604 it was in the hands of King Sæberet of Essex,

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 Kent.

the one event which would account for a movement of the Kentish-men which we find taking place, at the moment which we have reached, along the southern bank of the Thames.¹

Since the death of Hengest the kingdom of Kent had played no direct part in the conquest of Britain. Jutes had indeed mastered the Isle of Wight, and Jutish houses had joined the Saxon war-bands in their winning of southern Britain; but the Jutish kingdom itself had rested quietly within its earlier limits between the Channel and the Thames. Under the great-grandson of Hengest, however, Æthelberht, who was born in the year of the fall of Sorbiodunum, and who mounted its throne as a child a little later, it again came boldly to the front.² Narrow as were its bounds, indeed, Kent equalled in political power the wider realms which were forming about it. It remained, as of old, one of the wealthiest and most flourishing

"*Orientalium Saxonum . . . quorum metropolis Lundenia civitas est,*" Bæda (H. E. ii. 3). And it passed into those of his sons (*ibid.* ii. 5).

¹ The settlers in the district west of London are known afterwards as the Middle-Saxons. But that they were only an offshoot of the East-Saxons is clear from the fact that, with London, they always belonged to the kingdom of Essex, and that Middlesex still forms a part of the East-Saxon bishopric of London.

² The date of Æthelberht's birth is given in the English Chronicle, a. 552 (in the late Canterbury copy). Bæda says that at his death in 616 "*regnum . . . quinquaginta et sex annis gloriosissime tenuerat*" (H. E. ii. 5), which fixes his accession in 560. He was thus only eight years old when he became king, and sixteen when he fought at Wimbledon.

parts of Britain. The ruin of Hengest's wars had been in some part repaired by the peace which had existed since its conquest a hundred years ago; for while the Gwent and the Thames valley were still being wasted with fight and ravage, the Cant-wara were settling quietly down into busy husbandmen along its coast, or on its downs, or in the fertile bottoms of the river-valleys that cleft them. It was a sign of this tranquillity that the district had even before Æthelberht's day resumed that intercourse with the Continent which the descent of the Jutes had for a while broken off; and that only a few years later we find men versed in the English tongue, the result of a commerce which must have again sprung to life, ready at hand in the ports of Gaul.¹

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With wealth and strength drawn from a century of peace, as well as with the pride which it drew from the memory of its earlier share in the conquest of Britain, Kent hardly needed any other stimulus to nerve it to efforts for a wider sway. But when Æthelberht looked out from his petty realm with dreams of sharing in the general advance of his race, the boy-king found himself shut in on every side save one by English ground. To the south-west lay Sussex and the Andredsweald; to the north over Thames lay the land of the East-Saxons; and only directly to the west, between the north downs and the Thames, did any tract of

Kent and
London.

¹ Bæda, H. E. i. c. 25.

CHAP. III. British country offer itself to his arms. In this
 Conquests quarter the Jutes had been baffled for a hundred
 of the years by the barriers in their way, by the wooded
 Saxons. fastnesses of the Dulwich heights, the tangled
 c. 500-577. swamp which stretched from these heights to the
 Thames, and the forces which would pour from
 London across its bridge to the suburb that occu-
 pied the site of the future Southwark. From the
 line of the Medway the West-Kentish warriors
 had crept forward along the strip of shore between
 Blackheath and the Thames, past Woolwich and
 Greenwich, to the edge of this morass; but here
 the border-line of Kent marks the limit of their
 advance. Nothing but the fall of the great city
 could remove the hindrance from their path; and
 we can hardly err in believing that it was the cap-
 ture of London by the East-Saxons which at last
 enabled the Jutes to force their way across the
 border, and to march in 568 on the tract to the
 west.¹

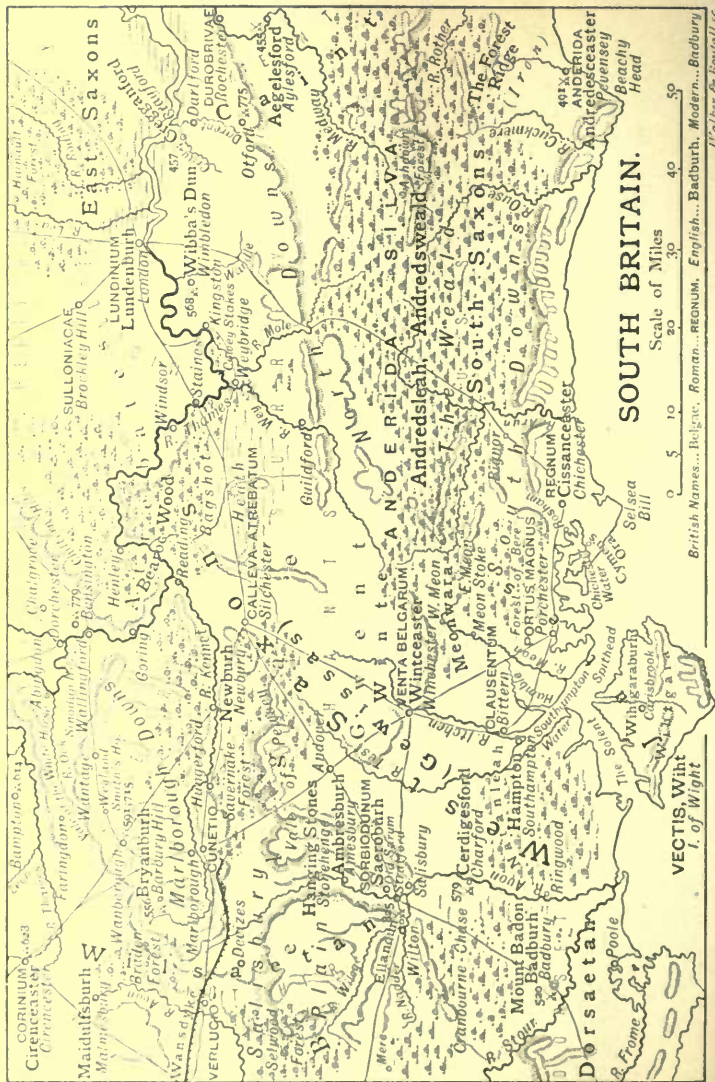
West- But Æthelberht had hardly struggled through
 Saxons and the marshes and entered on his long-coveted
 Silchester. district than his progress was again roughly
 barred. He found himself face to face, not with
 a British, but with an English foe; for the con-
 quests of the West-Saxons had brought them, as
 we have seen, to the western extremity of the very
 tract on which Æthelberht was advancing from
 the east. Their overrunning of Berkshire and the

¹ Eng. Chron. a. 568.

Marlborough Downs had carried them to the border of the Thames valley, and the course of the great river led them forward to the country along its banks. Only one obstacle lay in their path. Of the ring of fortresses that inclosed the Gwent, Calleva Atrebatum, the modern Silchester, which stood on the edge of the upland where the roads from Winchester and Old Sarum united on their way to London, alone remained in British hands. Silchester¹ presented a marked contrast to the towns which the Gewissas had as yet attacked. The fortresses of the Saxon Shore had been built simply as fortresses, and their small walled citadels stood apart from the general mass of habitations near them. In towns such as York, on the other hand, we see the first military settlement of the Roman conquest rising within the earlier walls, but at last so utterly outgrowing them that the bulk of the town lay in undefended suburbs, and the walled city contained little more than the quarters of troops and officials. Silchester belongs to neither of these classes. Originally the seat of a British tribe, its position in the heart of the island had deprived it of any military importance during the earlier ages of the Roman occupation, while it sheltered the town from the border-forays that alone broke the Roman peace. It was not till the decay of the Empire brought

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¹ For Silchester, see paper by Mr. Joyce, *Archæol. Journal*, vol. xxx. p. 10.



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trouble at last to its gates that inland towns such as Calleva were compelled to seek shelter in a ring of walls; and within these walls the whole town was naturally inclosed. It is this cause which accounts for the disproportion between the walled area of one town and another in Roman Britain, between the few acres inclosed by the walls of York and the space inclosed by the walls of Silchester or London. The circuit of the walls of Silchester is about three miles round; and their irregular and polygonal form, if we compare it with the regular quadrangle of Richborough or Lincoln, shows that Calleva was a fortified city, and not a city which had grown up within or around a fortress. Mutilated and broken down as it is, the wall with the wide ditch that still partially encircles it enables us to realize the military strength of the town. In the midst of its network of narrow streets lay a central Forum, round which stood the public offices and principal shops of the place, while one side was wholly occupied by a huge basilica, or justice hall, whose central nave was sustained by two rows of stately Corinthian pillars, and closed at each end by a lordly apse. Remains such as these show that the Roman tradition was still strong among the citizens of Calleva, and it may have been with the Roman eagle at their head, and in the Roman order, that its men marched against the West-Saxons. But all was in vain. We know nothing of the rout of

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Battle of
Wimbleton.

the burghers, or of the siege and ruin of their town. It is only the discovery of a legionary eagle, hidden away as it would seem in some secret recess, and there buried for ages beneath the charred wreck of one of its houses, that tells its own pathetic tale of the fall of Silchester.¹

The fall of this city opened to the West-Saxons the road to the west. By its capture they had in fact turned the flank of the Andredsweald. The impenetrable tract whose scrub and forest and clay bottoms had so long held the assailants of Southern Britain at bay lay between the two lines of chalk uplands, the South Downs and the North Downs, which diverged from the Gwent on which the West-Saxons had stood so long. But the capture of Calleva brought them fairly round the extremity of the Andredsweald, and opened for them the tract that lay between the North Downs and the Thames. From Silchester a road led through the heart of this tract to the south of the Bearroewood, which filled the bend of the river about Windsor, traversed the wild heaths of Bagshot, then as for ages later a lonely stretch of heather and sand, and dipping into the marshes that still leave their trace on the scenery about Weybridge, pushed through the thick woodlands which hid the gentle windings of the lower Mole²

¹ Joyce, *Silchester*, *Archæol. Journal*, xxx. p. 25.

² The local names show how thickly this district was wooded.

till it reached the little town which occupied the site of our Kingston.¹ Here the road crossed the Thames by a ferry, to strike along its northern bank towards London; and that the West-Saxons made no attempt to follow its course across the river adds force to the supposition that the city and the district about it were already in English hands.² But even in the country between the Thames and the Downs their way was barred by an English rival. Right in their path as they lay at Kingston stretched the low rise of a broad, open heath, which extended from the river's brink at Putney³ to the height or "dun" which was to be known from some later settler as Wibba's dun, or Wimbledon. The heath was studded with barrows that marked it as the scene of earlier conflicts; and an older intrenchment which covered seven acres of its surface may have been occupied by the forces under Æthelberht. But a century of peace had left the Jutes no match for veterans who were fresh from the long strife about the Gwent. The encounter of 568 was memorable as the first fight of Englishmen with Englishmen on British soil;⁴

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¹ Numerous remains have been found, which prove that a Roman station existed at Kingston.

² That they had no objection to crossing the river in itself is clear from the fact that they crossed it but a few years later into the territory of the Four Towns. This was British soil: and had our Middlesex been British soil, they would as naturally have crossed at Kingston.

³ The older form of this name, Putten-heath, tells its own tale.

⁴ Engl. Chron. a. 568.

CHAP. III. but the day went against the young Kentish King ;
 Conquests his army was thrown back across the Wandle on
 of the its own border, and the disputed district, the
 Saxons. Surrey of after days, became from that moment a
 c. 500-577. land of the West-Saxons.

The Four
 Towns.

Only one portion of the Thames valley now remained in British hands, the tract along its northern bank from the Chilterns to the Cotswolds ; and it was into the heart of this district that the West-Saxons penetrated as soon as they had mastered Surrey. Close over against their settlements in Berkshire lay a region which was subject to four British towns, now known to us only by their later names of Eynsham, Bensington, Aylesbury, and Lenborough, the last of these a small hamlet near the present Buckingham.¹ The district comprised in fact the valleys of the Thame and the Cherwell, as well as of a few streams yet further to the westward, such as the Woodrush, the Evenlode, and the Lech ; while to northwards it stretched across the bounds of the Thames-basin into the basin of the Wash, and reached in a narrow strip to the Ouse. It lay within a natural framework of river and woodland that marked it off from the rest of Britain. On the eastern side ran the escarpment of the Chilterns, whose chalk downs were covered with scrub and brushwood as well as broken with deep bottoms, which made them for hundreds of years to come almost im-

¹ Engl. Chron. a. 571.

penetrable to an army, and which effectually sheltered this tract from any aggression on the part of the Middle-Saxons. To the west, between the district of the Four Towns and the slopes of the Cotswolds, ran a line of woodlands and marshes that have left their traces in Wychwood and Canbury Forest, and in the tangled and difficult channels of the streams which drain them. These lines of defence drew together to the northward, and were linked to the woodlands about Towcester and the marshy meadows of the Ouse, while along the southern border of the district ran the Thames, then a deeper and more rapid river than now, guarded from near the site of the present Oxford to that of Abingdon by almost impenetrable woods, and along the bend from Goring to Henley by the fastness of the Chiltern Hills.

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As one looks westward from the Chilterns nowadays over Aylesbury Vale, the district of the Four Towns stretches away in undulating reaches of green meadowland, dotted with hamlets and homesteads that nestle beneath copses and tree clumps, the clay bottom of some primæval sea out of which low lifts of oolite rise at Aylesbury and Brill. Then as now the country was fertile and well peopled. The river Thame, which flows through the heart of it, gathers its waters from the Chiltern slopes, and running westward, till it passes the little town to which it gives its name, turns from that point abruptly to the south by

Their
 Districts.

CHAP. III. Chalgrove Field to the Thames. On the upper
 Conquests waters of the stream lay a town which is repre-
 of the sented by our Aylesbury, crowning with the
 Saxons. church, or Eglwys,¹ to which it possibly owed its
 c. 500-577. English name, a low rise of oolite that commanded
 the district from the base of the Chilterns as far
 as the town of Thame. A line running close
 beside Thame marks the present shire line between
 Buckingham and Oxfordshire, as it may then have
 marked the boundary between the territory that
 owned the rule of Aylesbury and that which
 owned the rule of Bensington. The district of
 this last town would thus comprise the lower
 valley of the Thame, with the country along the
 Thames, into which it falls, from the edge of the
 Chilterns to its bend northward toward Oxford,
 and would cover much the same ground as the
 south-eastern portion of the present Oxfordshire.
 The western portion of the same county seems
 to be coextensive with the district of Eynsham,
 the country of the Cherwell valley from Banbury
 to Oxford, a district bounded westward by the
 woods and marshes of the present Gloucestershire
 border, parted from that of Bensington perhaps
 by the rise of Shotover, and touching the districts
 of Aylesbury and Buckingham to the east in an
 irregular line, of which Brill may have been an
 outpost. The district of Lenborough or Bucking-

¹ Another derivation is from Ægil, the sun-archer of Teutonic mythology.

ham, which lay along the Ouse to the north of its three confederates, possibly reached eastward as far as the quiet meadows of Cowper's Olney and the limits of Bedford, and was bounded in other directions by the territories of Towcester and Aylesbury.¹

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It was from the south that the West-Saxons struck this country of the Four Towns. The conquests of Cynric had planted them, as we have seen, on the Ilsley and Marlborough Downs, in other words on the westernmost portion of the chalk-range that, starting from the Gwent of Hampshire, runs by these downs and the Chilterns to the uplands of East Anglia. Along the base of the slopes in which this range fronts the lower country to the north ran one of the earliest lines of British communication. Its name of the Icknield Way connects this road with the Iceni, whom the Romans found settled in our Norfolk and Suffolk, and points back to days in which this tribe stood

The
Icknield
Way.

¹ I have been guided in tracing these boundaries by the lie of the ground itself, and what we know of its natural features at this time, as well as by the limits of the actual shires. But a more careful examination of the local "dykes," etc., is needed before one can arrive at more than probable conclusions on the subject. It is needful too to bear in mind that the shires of this district probably owe their actual form to administrative arrangements of the tenth century; and that though they may have preserved the boundaries of older tribal divisions, they do not everywhere exactly coincide with them. Thus, part of the present Hertfordshire, as the diocesan limits show, belonged originally to the district of the Four Towns, and remained West-Saxon till the establishment of the Danelaw. Bedfordshire, again, is made up of more than the district of the "Bedecanford" of Cuthwulf's day.

CHAP. III. supreme in south-eastern Britain, and when the
 Conquests road served as their line of traffic and of military
 of the Saxons. communication with the Gwent of Hampshire and
 c. 500-577. the mining district of Cornwall.¹ Seldom climbing
 to the crest of the down, and equally avoiding the
 deep bottoms beneath the slopes of the escarpment,
 its course recalls a time when the wayfarer shrank
 equally from the dangers of the open country and
 from the thickets and marshes which made the
 lower grounds all but impassable. The road long
 remained one of the main thoroughfares of the
 island; pilgrims from the west traversed it
 throughout the Middle Ages on their way to the
 shrine of St. Edmund at Bury; and but two
 centuries ago lines of pack-horses carried along it
 bales of woollen goods from the manufacturing
 towns of the eastern counties.

Battle of
 Bedford.

It was along the Icknield Way, therefore, that
 the West-Saxons would naturally have pushed into
 the heart of the island. But their advance had
 been brought to a standstill by a sudden gap in
 the line of heights, the gap through which the
 Thames, turning abruptly to the south, cuts its
 way through the downs to its lower valley and
 the sea. It was this obstacle of the great river
 which had bent them to their march along its
 southern bank and their conquest of Surrey. But
 Surrey once won, their advance along the line of

¹ For the Icknield Way, see Guest, "Four Roman Ways,"
Origines Celticae, ii. 226.

the chalk-downs was resumed; and the barrier of the river was forced at a spot whose name preserves for us the memory of the invaders. Just before the Thames enters the gap beneath the Chilterns, the Icknield Way crossed it by a ford, which was recognized for a thousand years as the main pass across the river. Here probably the Romans first crossed into Mid-Britain, and it was by the same point that the Norman conqueror made his way after Hastings into the heart of the island. With the single exception indeed of Halliford, near the Conway Stakes, this was the lowest point in its course in which the Thames under its then tidal conditions could be forded at all.¹ It was by this ford, the Wallingford or Ford of the Wealhas² or Welsh-men, as the conquerors called it, that the West-Sexe must have passed the river in 571.³ Their leader was Cuthwulf, another son of Cynric, a brother of Ceawlin and Cutha, eager, it may be, to rival the achievements of his father and brother in war. Of the events of this campaign, however, we know but one, the battle with which it closed. From the spot at

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¹ Guest, "Campaign of Aulus Plautius," *Origines Celticae*, ii. 386, 388, 400.

² It was by this name, which means "strangers," or "unintelligible people," that the English knew the Britons; and it is the name by which the Britons, oddly enough, now know themselves.

³ "The name of the earlier conquerors still lives in the neighbouring Englefield."—Freeman, "Norman Conquest," iii. p. 542.

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which it was fought it seems as if Cuthwulf's raid had carried him from Wallingford by the Ickniold Way along the western slope of the Chilterns as far as Bedford before the forces of the Four Towns could gather at the news of the foray, intercept him as he fell back from the valley of the Ouse, and force him to an engagement.¹

But whatever were the circumstances which brought about the battle, victory fell as of old to the freebooters, and the success of Cuthwulf's men was followed by the ruin of the Four Towns of the league.

Halt of
 West-
 Saxons.

The last raid of the West-Saxons had brought them to the verge of Mid-Britain. That they paused at this point in their advance to the north, and that the upper Ouse at Bedford remained the boundary of their conquests in this quarter, may probably be explained, like their previous turning away from London, by the fact that the country which they had reached was already in the hands of Englishmen. No written record indeed fixes the dates of the winning of central Britain; but the halt of Cuthwulf is a significant one. In the years that followed the victory of 571 the West-Saxons must have spread over the country they had won, over an area which roughly corresponds to that of the shires of Oxford, Bedford, and Bucks. To the eastward, therefore, their settlements were pushed along the clay-flats of the

¹ E. Chron. 571; Gnest, *Origines Celticæ*, ii. 198.

upper Ouse, along the valley which lies between the chalk-ranges of the Chilterns and the oolitic upland of our Northamptonshire. On the Chilterns, as we know, the East-Saxons had for some while been settled about Hertford; but that the West-Sexe made no effort to push further to the east can only be explained by the presence of other Englishmen in that quarter. No natural obstacles arrested their march along the Ouse; neither forest nor hill forced them to halt at the point in its course which is marked by the little town of St. Neots, or to draw their border line from it along such lines as the little stream of the Kym.¹ We can only account for such a halt by supposing that, across this border line on the course of the lower Ouse, the ground which now forms our Huntingdonshire had been occupied before 571 by the Engle folk whom we find in later days settled there.

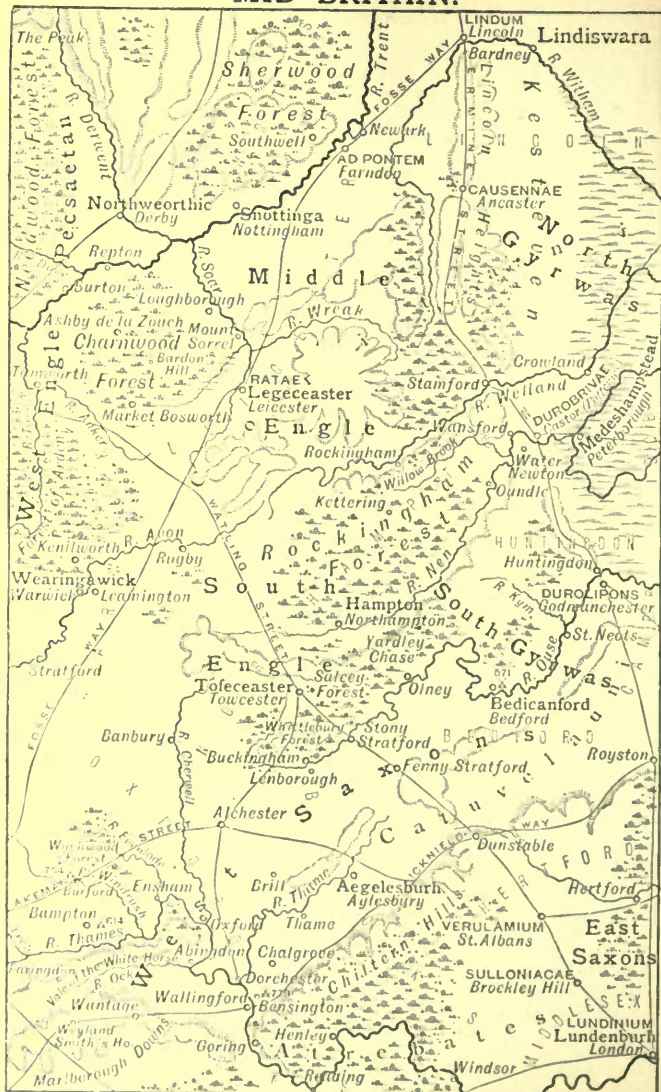
That the Engle were at the same time masters of the upland which stretched like a bar across Cuthwulf's road to the north is less certain; for in this quarter, as we have seen, the dense screen of forests along the southern slopes of Northamptonshire might of themselves have held the West-Saxons at bay. But the conquest of the Trent valley must now have been going on; and the

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Attack on
Severn
Valley.

¹ I do not rely wholly on the fact of the present shire line; for here language serves as a more definite boundary. Bedfordshire men still speak a Saxon, Huntingdon and Northamptonshire folk speak an Engle, dialect.

MID BRITAIN.



presence of Englishmen on the northern upland is the best explanation of the sudden wheel which the West-Saxons now made to the west. Directly westward, indeed, they were still not as yet to press; for the woods of Dorsetshire baffled them, and those of the Frome valley long proved a protection to the Britons of Somerset. Nor, for reasons we are less able to discover, did they push up the oolitic slopes from our Oxfordshire to the brow of the Cotswolds, where the town of Corinium challenged their arms. It may have been that the tangled streams, the woodlands, and the pass over the Thames at Lechlade, which protected this district, were still held too strongly by the forces of the city. But on their north-western border, in the interval between these lines of attack, lay a third line which was guarded by no such barriers, the line of the lower Severn valley, and it was on this tract that the West-Sexe poured from the Wiltshire downs in 577.¹ The country was richer than any they had as yet traversed. Nowhere do the remains of both private and public buildings show greater wealth and refinement than at Corinium, the chief town of the Cotswolds, which stood on the site of our Cirencester, and which was surpassed in wealth and importance among its fellow towns only

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¹ As to this inroad I follow in the main Dr. Guest's paper, "On the English Conquest of the Severn Valley," *Origines Celticae*, ii. 284.

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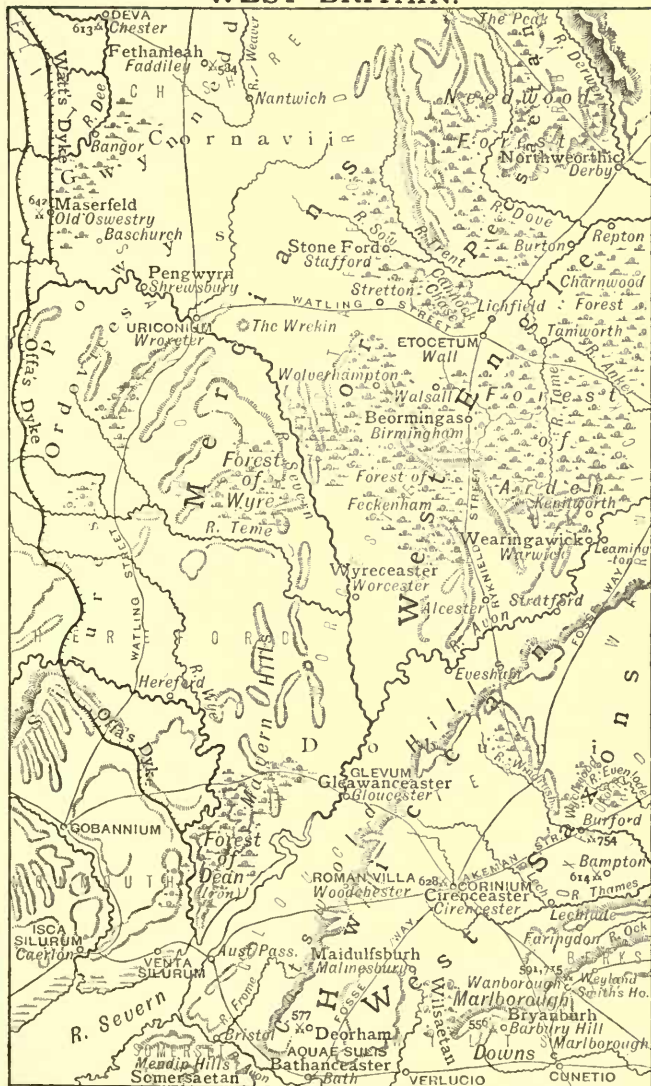
c. 500-577.

by York, London, and Colchester.¹ Below the Cotswolds, in the valley of the Severn, Glevum, the predecessor of our Gloucester, though smaller in size, was equally important from its position at the head of the estuary, and from its neighbourhood to the iron works of the Forest of Dean. Less than these in extent, but conspicuous from the grandeur of its public buildings, Bath was then, as in later times, the fashionable resort of the gouty provincial. Its hot springs were covered by a colonnade which lasted down to almost recent times ; and its local deity, Sul, may still have found worshippers in the lordly temple whose fragments are found among its ruins.² The territory of the three towns shows their power, for it comprised the whole district of the Cotswolds and the lower Severn, with a large part of what is now northern Somersetshire. It stretched therefore from Mendip on the south as far northwards as the forest which then covered almost the whole of Worcestershire. This fertile district was thickly set with the country houses and estates of the wealthier provincials. On either side of a road that runs through the heart of it, from Cirencester to Austpassage over the Severn, as well as along the

¹ Guest, "Conquest of Severn Valley," *Origines Celticae*, ii. 282. For Corinium, see paper by Mr. Tucker, *Archæol. Journ.* vi. 321. The modern Cirencester "does not occupy more than one-third of the area of the Roman city."

² The Roman remains at Bath have been described by Mr. Searth in numerous papers, some of which may be found in the *Proceedings of the Somerset Archæological Society*.

WEST BRITAIN.



same scale as South Britain.

Walker & Boutall sc.

CHAP. III. Roads which linked the three cities together, these
 Conquests mansions stood thickly ; and that of Woodchester
 of the is perhaps the largest and most magnificent whose
 Saxons. remains have as yet been found in Britain.¹ Two
 c. 500-577. courts, round which ran the farm buildings and
 domestic buildings of the house, covered an area
 five hundred feet deep and three hundred broad.
 Every colonnade and passage had its tessellated
 pavement ; marble statues stood out from the
 gaily painted walls ; while pictures of Orpheus
 and Pan gleamed from amid the fanciful scroll-
 work and fretwork of its mosaic floors.

Battle of
 Deorham.

It was from houses such as these, and from
 the three cities to which they clung, that the
 army gathered which met the West-Saxons under
 Ceawlin as they pushed over the Cotswolds into
 the valley of the Severn. But the old municipal
 independence seems to have been passing away.
 The record of the battle in the chronicle of the
 conquerors connects the three cities with three
 kings ; and from the Celtic names of these kings,
 Conmael, Condidan or Kyndylan, and Farinmael,
 we may infer that the Roman town party, which
 had once been strong enough to raise Aurelius to
 the throne of Britain, was now driven to bow to
 the supremacy of native chieftains.² It was the
 forces of these kings that met Ceawlin at Deorham,

¹ Wright, "Celt, Roman, and Saxon," pp. 229-240.

² E. Chron. a. 577. Guest, "Conquest of Severn Valley,"
 Origines Celticae, ii. 283.

a village which lies northward of Bath on a chain of hills overlooking the Severn valley, and whose defeat threw open the country of the three towns to the West-Saxon arms. Through the three years that followed the invaders must have been spreading over the district which this victory made their own. Westward, if Welsh legend is to be trusted, their forays reached across the Severn as far as the Wye.¹ To the south they seem to have pushed across the Avon past the site of the future Bristol, and over the limestone mass of Mendip, whence they drove off in flight the lead-miners who have left their cinder-heaps along its crest, till they were checked in their progress by the marshes of Glastonbury.² In the south-west they were unable to dislodge the Britons from the forest of Braden, the woodland that filled the Frome valley; and this wedge of unconquered ground ran up for the next hundred years into the heart of their territory. But in the rich tract along the lower Severn which the site of their victory overlooked their settlements lay thick. Here, in the present Gloucestershire and Worcestershire, the settlers bore the name of the Hwiccas,³ a name which took a yet wider

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Saxons.

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¹ Guest, "Conq. of Severn Valley," *Origines Celticae*, ii. 285.

² Guest, "Welsh and English Boundaries," *Origines Celticae*, ii. 249.

³ Theodore set the "bishop of the Hwiccas" at Worcester; and his diocese included both the counties of Worcester and Gloucester as well as the adjacent districts. This seems to prove that "Hwiccan" was the older name for the settlers

range as from the valley of the Severn the invaders spread over the upland of the Cotswolds to settle round the fallen Corinium, and found homes along the southern skirts of the forest of Arden.

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along the whole of the lower Severn, the Cotswolds above it, and southern Warwickshire; and Florence (a. 897) places Cirencester "in meridionali parte Wicciorum"—which would confirm this. Earle, "Local Names of Gloucestershire" [Archæol. Journ. xix. pp. 51, 52], connects the name with our Wychwood, spelt in 841 "Hwiece-wudu," and which, though in Oxfordshire, is within a short distance of Gloucestershire, and marks the watershed between Severn and Thames. He seems, however, to limit the Hwiccas to Gloucestershire: and to give Worcestershire to the Magesætas, whom Mr. Freeman places in Herefordshire and Shropshire [Norm. Conquest, i. p. 561].

CHAPTER IV

THE SETTLEMENT OF THE CONQUERORS

The Age of
Settlement.

WITH the battle of Deorham and the winning of the lower Severn valley we enter on a new age of our history. The conquest indeed was far from being complete, for when Ceawlin paused in his career of victory half the island still remained unconquered, and the border line of the invaders ran roughly along the rise that parts the waters of Britain, from Ettrick across Cheviot, along the Yorkshire moors to the Peak of Derbyshire, thence by the skirts of Arden to the mouth of Severn, and across the estuary of that river, by Mendip, through the woods of Dorset to the sea. But the country within this line comprised all that was really worth winning, for the wild land to westward and northward had little to tempt an invader. Though the tide of invasion therefore still crept on, it crept on slowly and uncertainly; and from this time the energies of the conquerors were mainly absorbed, not in winning fresh land,

but in settling in the land they had won. We pass, then, from an age of Conquest to an age of Settlement. But dim as was the light that guided us through much of our earlier story, it is bright beside the darkness that wraps the first upgrowth of English life on British soil. No written record tells us how Saxon or Engle dealt with the land they had made their own, how they drove out its older inhabitants, or how they shared it among the new, how the settlers settled down in township or thorpe, or how they moulded into shape, under changed conditions, the life they had brought with them from German shores. Even legend and tradition are silent as to their settlement. It is only by help of the few traces of this older life which remain embedded in custom, or in law, or in later verse, that we can sketch its outlines, and such a sketch must necessarily be dim and incomplete.

The character of the settlement was in great measure determined by that of the conquest itself; as that of the conquest was determined by the main characteristics which distinguished the winning of Britain from the winning of the other western provinces of the Empire. The first of these was the comparative weakness of the attack. Nowhere had the barbaric force been so small or its onset so fitful. Difficulties of transport made attack by sea less easy than attack by land; and the warriors who were brought across the Channel

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or the German Ocean by the boats of Hengest and Cerdic must have been few beside the hosts who followed Alboin or Chlodowig over the Alps or the Rhine. The story of the conquest confirms the English tradition that the invaders of Britain landed in small parties, and that they were only gradually reinforced by after-comers. Nor was there any joint action among the assailants to compensate for the smallness of their numbers.¹ Though all spoke the same language and used the same laws, they had no such bond of political union as the Franks; and though all were bent on winning the same land, each band and each leader preferred their own separate course of action to any collective enterprise.

Stubborn-
ness of the
defence.

A second, and yet more momentous characteristic, was the stubbornness of the defence. It is this indeed which above all distinguished the conquest of Britain from that of other provinces of Rome. In all the world-wide struggles between Rome and the Germanic races, no land was so stubbornly fought for or so hardly won. In Gaul the Frank or the Visigoth met little native resistance save from the peasants of Brittany or Auvergne. No popular revolt broke out against the rule of Odoacer or Theodoric in Italy. But in Britain the invader was met by a courage and tenacity almost equal to his own. So far as we can follow the meagre record of the conquerors, or track their

¹ Stubbs, *Constit. Hist.* i. 67.

advance by the dykes and ruins it left behind it, every inch of ground seems to have been fought for. Field by field, town by town, forest by forest, the land was won; and as each bit of ground was torn away from its defenders the beaten men sullenly drew back from it to fight as stubbornly for the next.

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But there was yet a third characteristic of the conquest which told on the after settlement, and this was the way in which the struggle was influenced by the nature of the conquered country itself. It is impossible to follow the story of its winning without being struck by the natural obstacles which the province presented to an invader. Elsewhere in the Roman world the work of the conqueror was aided by the very civilization of Rome. Vandal and Goth marched along Roman highways, over ground cleared by the Roman axe, as they crossed river or ravine on the Roman bridge. To a great extent it was so in Britain. But though Britain had been Romanized, she had been less Romanized than any province of the West; and the material civilization of the island was yet more backward than its social civilization. The mere forest-belts which remained over vast stretches of country formed mighty barriers, barriers which were everywhere strong enough to check the advance of an invader, and sometimes strong enough to arrest it. The Jutes and the South-Saxons were brought wholly to a

Nature
of the
country.

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standstill by the Andredsweald. The East-Saxons never pierced the woods of their western border. The Fens proved impassable to the East-Angles. It was only after a long and terrible struggle that the West-Saxons could hew their way through the forests that girt in the Gwent of the southern coast, and in the height of their power they were thrown back from the forests of Cheshire.

The Britons
driven off.

Under such conditions the overrunning of Britain could not fail to be a very different matter from the rapid and easy overrunning of such countries as Gaul. Instead of quartering themselves quietly, like their fellows abroad, on subjects who were glad to buy peace by obedience and tribute, Engle and Saxon had to make every inch of Britain their own by hard fighting. Instead of mastering the country in a few great battles, they had to tear it bit by bit from its defenders in a weary and endless strife. How slow the work of English conquest was may be seen from the fact that it took nearly thirty years to win Kent alone, and sixty to complete the conquest of Southern Britain, while the conquest of the bulk of the island was only wrought out after two centuries of bitter warfare. But it was just through the length of the struggle, that, of all the German conquests, this was the most thorough and complete. That of France by the Franks, or that of Italy by the Lombards, proved little more than a forcible settlement of the one or the other

among tributary subjects who were destined in a long course of ages to absorb their conquerors. French is the tongue, not of the Frank, but of the Gaul whom he overcame; and the fair hair of the Lombard is all but unknown in Lombardy. But almost to the close of the sixth century the English conquest of Britain was a sheer dispossession of the conquered people; and, so far as the English sword in these earlier days reached, Britain became England,¹ a land, that is, not of Britons, but of Englishmen.

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There is no need to believe that the clearing of the land meant the general slaughter of the men who held it, or to account for such a slaughter by supposed differences between the temper of the English and those of other conquerors. Fierce and cruel as they may have been, the picture which Gregory of Tours gives us of the Franks hinders us from believing that Englishmen were more fierce or cruel than other Germans who attacked the Empire. Nor is there more ground for the assertion² that they were utterly strange to the Roman civilization; indeed the mere presence of Saxon vessels in the Channel for a hundred years before their descent upon Britain must have familiarized its invaders with what civilization was to be found in the provinces of the

Not
slaughtered.

¹ I use the word only by anticipation. The name "England" itself is not found before the days of Eadgar and Dunstan.

² Freeman, "Norman Conquest," vol. i. p. 20.

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West. It was not the temper of the conquerors that gave its character to the conquest of Britain so much as the temper of the conquered. The displacement of the conquered people was only made possible by their own stubborn resistance, and by the slow progress of the conquerors in the teeth of it. Slaughter no doubt there was on the battle-field or in towns like Anderida, whose long defence woke wrath in their besiegers. But for the most part the Britons cannot have been slaughtered; they were simply defeated and drew back.

Proofs of
the with-
drawal of
the Britons.

The proofs of such a displacement lie less in isolated passages from chronicle or history than in the broad features of the conquest itself.¹ When Hengest landed in Thanet he found Britain inhabited by a people of Celtic and Roman blood, a people governed by Celtic or Roman laws, speaking the Welsh or Latin tongue, still sharing to a great extent the civilization and manners of the Empire from which they had parted, and at least outwardly conforming to the Christian faith which that Empire professed. The outer aspect of the land remained that of a Roman province; it was guarded by border fortresses; it was studded with peopled cities; it was tilled by great landowners whose villas rose proudly over the huts of their serfs. But when Ceawlin turned from the battle-field of Deorham, the face of the Britain that lay

¹ Stubbs, *Constit. Hist.* i. 70.

behind him was utterly changed. So far as the English or Saxon sword had reached, to the eastward, that is, of the line which we have drawn through Central Britain, the country showed no sign of British or Roman life at all. The tradition both of conquerors and of conquered tells us that an utter change had taken place in the men that dwelt in it. They knew themselves only as Englishmen, and in the history or law of these English inhabitants we find as yet not a trace of the existence of a single Briton among them.¹ The only people that English chronicle or code knows of as living on the conquered soil are Englishmen. Nor does the British tradition know of any other. Had Britons formed part of the population in the land which had been reft away by the invader's sword, they must have been known to their fellow Britons beyond the English border. But in the one record of such a Britain that remains to us, the history of Gildas, there is no hint of their existence.² To him, as to his fellow-countrymen, the land of the English-

¹ From the close of the sixth century, when the conquest took wider bounds and a new character, we find a different state of things in the newly annexed districts. Here I am speaking strictly of the earlier age of conquest and of the portion of Britain which it covered.

² There is, indeed, a single phrase (Hist. c. 25, "alii fame confecti accedentes, manus hostibus dabant in ævum servituri"), which speaks of the surrender of Britons to their conquerors, but such captives would at such a time be sold into slavery, and the mention of them only makes the silence of Gildas elsewhere the more significant.

CHAP. IV. men is a foreign land and its people a foreign people.

The
Settlement
of the
Conquerors
—
Evidence of
names.

The contemporary tradition, then, is everywhere the same ; and it is confirmed by every fact which meets us in the path of our story. Had the older inhabitants remained as serfs or as a dependent people among their conquerors, as the older inhabitants of Gaul remained among the Franks, or those of Italy among the Lombards, we should find a state of things in some degree like to that of Italy or Gaul. We should find at any rate some traces of the provincials in the history of the joint population, some traces of their cities and their country-houses, some of their names mingling with those of the new-comers, some remains of their language, their religion, their manners, and their law. But in conquered Britain we find not a trace of these things. The designations of the local features of the country indeed, the names of hill and vale and river, often remain purely Celtic. There are “pens” and “duns” among our uplands, “combes” in our valleys, “exes” and “ocks” among our running waters. But when we look at the traces of human life itself, at the names of the villages and hamlets that lie scattered over the country side, we find them purely English. The “vill” and the “city” have vanished, and in their stead appear the “tun” and “ham” and “thorpe” of the new settlers. If we turn from the names of these villages to those of the men who live in them the contrast becomes

even stronger. So far as existing documents tell us anything, they tell us that Roman and Welshman wholly vanished from the land. When Gregory of Tours writes the story of Gaul after its conquest by the Franks, we meet in the course of his narrative with as many Roman names as Frank. But in the parallel history of Britain after its conquest by the English which we owe to Bæda, we meet with no British or Roman names at all. He gives us indeed the names of Britons in districts which still remained free from English rule; but amidst the hundreds of men and women whom he records as living and acting in the new England, there is not one whose name is not almost certainly English.¹

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It is the same with language. Latin, which had been the official tongue of the province, the language of its soldiers and civil administrators, and probably that of its citizens, withdrew before the invader to the south-west and the west. When it again appeared in eastern Britain, it came as a foreign tongue brought in by foreign missionaries, and needing interpreters to explain it to the men it found there.² The British tongue, the tongue, that is, of the mass of the population even under Roman rule, though it lived on as the tongue of the Britons themselves in the land to which they withdrew, has left hardly a trace of its existence

Evidence of
language.

¹ I do not know of any that have even been claimed as British save Coifi and the West-Saxon Ceadwalla.

² Bæda, H. E. lib. i. c. 23, 25. Bæda, Vit. Abbatum, ed. Stevenson, p. 141.

in the language which has taken its place over the conquered area.¹ There is the same utter change in government, in society, in law. The Roman law simply disappeared ;² and no trace of the body of Celtic customs which form the Welsh law can be detected in the purely Teutonic institutes which formed the law of the English settlers. The political institutions that we find established in the conquered land, as well as the social usages of the conquering people, are utterly different from those of the Roman or the Celt ; not only are they those which are common to the German race, but they are the most purely German institutions that any branch of the German race has preserved.³

¹ The Celtic words in our earlier English were first collected by Mr. Garnett in his "Philological Essays." They are few, and mostly words of domestic use, such as *basket*, which may well have crept in from the female slaves who must here and there have been seized by the invaders. It must be remembered, too, that we have no means of ascertaining *when* such words became English ; and that after the change in the character of the conquest, that is from the seventh century, Welsh words like Welsh names would naturally filter in from the mixed population of western and south-western Britain.

² Stubbs, *Constit. Hist.* vol. i. p. 11.

³ Stubbs, *Constit. Hist.* vol. i. p. 6. "If its history is not the perfectly pure development of Germanic principles, it is the nearest existing approach to such a development." . . . Again, at p. 11, "The polity developed by the German races on British soil is the purest product of their primitive instinct. . . . The institutions of the Saxons of Germany long after the conquest of Britain were the most perfect exponent of the system which Tacitus saw, and described in the *Germania* ; and the polity of their kinsmen in England, though it may not be older in its monuments than the *Lex Salica*, is more entirely free from Roman influences. In England the common germs were de-

Had any fragment of the older provincial life survived, the analogy of other provinces shows that it would have been that municipal organization which elsewhere handed down the tradition of the Empire. In the Roman world political and social life had been concentrated in its towns; and we have seen how great a part they played in the times which followed the withdrawal of the Roman rule. But with the English conquest the towns disappear. Though the Englishmen like other Germans shrank from dwelling within city walls, a native population, had it survived here as it survived elsewhere, would have remained, subject indeed but unchanged, in its older homes. But as the conquest passed over them, the towns of Roman Britain sank into mere ruins. Some never rose from their ruins. Anderida remained a wreck of uninhabited stones in the twelfth century,¹ and its square of walls remains lonely and uninhabited still. Silchester and Uriconium, large as they were, have only been brought to light again by modern research. The very sites of many still remain undiscovered. Such a permanent extinc-

veloped and ripened with the smallest intermixture of foreign elements. Not only were all the successive invasions of Britain which from the eighth to the eleventh century diversify the history of the island conducted by nations of common extraction, but, with the exception of ecclesiastical influence, no foreign interference that was not German in origin was admitted at all. Language, law, customs, and religion, preserve their original conformation and colouring."

¹ Huntingdon, *Hist. Angl.* (ed. Arnold), p. 45.

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tion however was seldom possible, for the local advantages which had drawn population to hill or river-ford in Celtic or Roman times began again to tell as the new England itself grew populous and industrial; and the sites of these older cities became necessarily the sites of the new. But their repeopling was only after centuries of desolation and neglect. We have no ground for believing that Winchester had risen on the site of the Belgic Gwenta before the middle of the seventh century.¹ Cambridge was still a heap of ruins in the eighth century,² though it had risen to fresh life in the tenth. The great military station of Deva was still the "waste Chester" that Ælthelfrith left it, when Ælthelflæd four hundred years after made it her Chester on the Dec.³ And even when life returned to them, it was long before the new towns could again cover the whole area of their ruined predecessors. It was not till Cnut's time that York could cover the area of Eburacum. It was not till after Dunstan's day that Canterbury grew big enough to fill again the walls of Durovernum. It was not till the very eve of the conquest that London itself stretched its dwellings over the space which lay within the walls of Londinium.⁴ The

¹ The local traditions place the hallowing of the new church there in 648. See Rudborne, *Hist. Major*, and *Annales Ecc. Wint.* (*Anglia Sacra*, i. 189, 288).

² *Beda*, H. E. lib. iv. c. 19.

³ *Flor. Worc.* (ed. Thorpe), "*Civitatem Legionum, tunc temporis desertam.*" *Eng. Chron.* a. 894. "*Anre wæstre castre.*"

⁴ At all these three towns the parishes furthest from the

new towns, too, grew up as new towns. Of the life or municipal government of their Roman predecessors they knew nothing. They inherited no curials or decurions. Their municipal constitution, like their social organization, was of a purely English type.¹

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The faith of Britain perished as utterly. Nothing brings home to us so vividly the change which had passed over the conquered country as the entire disappearance of its older religion. Had the conquest of Britain been in any way like the conquest of Italy or of Gaul, its religious issue could hardly have been other than theirs. Had the Britons been left existing on the soil as a subject population, paying tribute to or tilling the lands of foreign lords, the change of faith would most probably have been a change in the religion of the conquerors, and not of the conquered. To judge from the stubbornness with which the Romanized peoples rejected heathendom, and from the facility with which the Teutonic races elsewhere yielded to the spell of Christianity, it was not the Britons who would have become worshippers of Woden, but Engle and Saxon who would have become worshippers of Christ. But even if we suppose the invaders to have retained their old religion, the religious aspect of the land

Evidence of
religion.

new starting-point within the walls are, as the dedications of their churches show, of these dates.

¹ Stubbs, *Constit. Hist.* vol. i. p. 105 and note.

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as a whole would have been little altered. In no instance did the Teutonic conquerors wage a religious war on the faiths of the conquered people. To barbarous races, indeed, who look on religion as simply a part of the national life, proselytism or persecution is impossible. The heathendom of the invaders would have been confined to their own settlements, and the whole British population would have remained Christian as before. Its churches, its priesthood, its ecclesiastical organization, its dioceses and provinces, its connection with the rest of the Western Church, would have gone on without material change.

But what we find is the very reverse of this. In the conquered part of Britain Christianity wholly disappeared. The Church, and the whole organization of the Church, vanished. The few religious buildings of whose existence we catch a glimpse survived only as deserted ruins. So far was any connection with Western Christianity from existing, that all the rest of the Christian world, whether of the Celtic or Roman obedience, lost sight of the conquered part of Britain altogether. When Rome long afterwards sought to renew its contact with it, it was as with a heathen country;¹ and it was in the same way as a heathen

¹ Bæda, H. E. lib. i. c. 23 The first Roman missionaries thought of returning home rather than of encountering these heathen; "*redire domum potius, quam barbaram, feram, incredulamque gentem, cujus ne linguam quidem nossent, adire cogitabant.*"

country that it was regarded by the Christians of Ireland and by the Christians of Wales. When missionaries at last made their way into its bounds, there is no record of their having found a single Christian in the whole country. What they found was a purely heathen land; a land where homestead and boundary and the very days of the week bore the names of new gods who had displaced Christ, and where the inhabitants were so strange to the faith they brought that they looked at its worship as magic.¹ It is hardly possible to conceive a stronger proof that the conquest of Britain had been a real displacement of the British people; for if Wodenism so utterly supplanted Christianity, it can only have been because the worshippers of Woden had driven off from the soil the worshippers of Christ.

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Complete, however, as was the wreck of Roman life, complete as was the displacement up to this point of the older British population, the past history of the island was not without its influence on the new settlers. Its physical structure to a great extent dictated the lines of their advance, the extent of their conquest, and their political distribution over the conquered soil, as it had dictated the conquest and settlement of the races that had preceded them. The province indeed gave its bounds to the new England. It was not the island of Britain which Engle and Saxon had

Influence
of Roman
Britain
on the
English.

¹ Bæda, H. E. lib. i. c. 25.

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mastered, it was the portion of it which lay within the bounds of the Roman Empire. Even in its widest advance, English life stopped abruptly at the Friths of Forth and of Clyde, as Roman life had stopped there before it; while it penetrated but slowly and imperfectly into the western and north-western districts of Britain, as Rome had penetrated but slowly and imperfectly into them. The mountains and moors which had checked the progress of the one invader checked the progress of the other. But even within the limits of conquered Britain, its physical features often shaped the settlement of the conquerors. The story of the conquest, as we have striven to follow it, has shown us how great an influence the very ground exerted on the direction and the fortunes of every English campaign. In the bulk of cases its character determined the bounds, and with the bounds the after-destinies of the various peoples that parted the land between them. The Andreds-weald with its outliers prisoned the Jutes within the limits of the Caint, and turned them into Cantwara, or Kentish men. It dwarfed into political insignificance the Surrey-folk and the South-Saxons, whom it pressed between its northern edge and the Thames, or between its southern edge and the sea. The insular character of the Gwent upon the eastern coast forced the bands of invaders that landed there into political union as the people of the East-Angles. In the same way

the long range of moorland and fen and sea-coast, which formed the framework of Yorkshire, and so long preserved the individuality of this portion of the island, furnished the Deirans with their natural boundaries, and made them, from the mere space they inclosed, one of the greater peoples of Britain.¹ The West-Saxons profited even more from the character of the ground which they traversed. Touching originally at the one point in the southern coast where access to the province was easy, they found their first settlements moulded by the bounds and divisions of the southern downs, while from their slopes to eastward and westward lay open before them the valleys of the Severn and the Thames. The territory of Ceawlin, with all the long series of events which widened the realm of the West-Saxons into the kingdom of England, were but the necessary issues of the physical circumstances which brought about their first landing and settlement in Britain.

Nor was the political structure of the province without as distinct an influence on the settlement of the invaders. The towns with their subject

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Influence
of its
political
and social
structure.

¹ It is, however, remarkable that in the case of Yorkshire the incidents of the conquest modified the political boundaries of both Celtic and Roman times. In both, the territory on the western and eastern coast belonged to the same district, and the moorlands which part our Yorkshire from our Lancashire formed no boundary line. In the earlier days of the English conquest it seemed as if this arrangement would be preserved; and only a complicated set of transactions in later times made Yorkshire the separate district which it is.

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districts often gave shape and bounds to the states which their conquerors founded about their ruins. The districts of Camulodunum, Verulamium, and Londinium, made up the kingdom of the East-Saxons. The territory which the West-Saxons acquired after the battle of Bedford to the north of the Thames consisted of the districts of four cities, whose early names are forgotten. Those of Bath, Gloucester, and Cirencester, formed the territory of the Hwiccas. That of Rataë or Leicester formed in all probability the territory of the Middle-English. And what was true of the political life of Britain was true also of its social life. If the Roman landowner had disappeared, if his villa was a mound of ashes and charred stones, if his cattle and serfs had been alike slaughtered or driven off from the soil, the material work which four hundred years of continuous life had done could not wholly pass away. After all his slaughter and pillage, the Englishman found himself in no mere desert. On the contrary, he stood in the midst of a country, the material framework of whose civilization remained unharmed. The Roman road still struck like an arrow over hill and plain. The Roman bridge still spanned river and stream. If farmer and landowner had disappeared, farm and field remained; and if the conquerors settled at all, it was inevitable that they should settle in the bulk of cases beside the homes and on the estates of the men they had

driven out. It was thus that the Roman "vill" often became the English township; that the boundaries of its older masters remained the bound-marks of the new; that serf and læt took the place of colonus and slave; while the system of cultivation was probably in the case of both peoples sufficiently identical to need little change in field or homestead.¹

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But if the old divisions of the land remained to furnish limits for the states of its conquerors, or bounds of field and farm for their settlers, the whole organization of government and society had disappeared with the men to whom it belonged. Rome was gone; and its law, its literature, its faith, had gone with it. The Briton himself was now simply a stranger, gazing back upon the land he had lost from a distant frontier. The mosaics, the coins, which we dig up in our fields, are no relics of our fathers, but of a world which our fathers' sword swept utterly away. How thoroughly the work was done we can see in a single instance, that of the first land which the invaders won. In the days before the Jutish conquest few parts of the island were wealthier or more populous than the Caint or Kent, the chalk upland which jutted into the Channel between the alluvial flats of the Thames estuary and the mouth of the Weald.²

Roman
Kent.

¹ It is in this settlement on the existing estates, etc., that we find the explanation of many facts adduced by Mr. Coote, in his various works, to prove the continuity of the life of Roman Britain.

² The Roman and Jutish Caint, it must be remembered,

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This district had, in fact, been one of the earliest points of human settlement in Britain. In Roman times its towns were small and unimportant; those of the coast seem simply to have been military stations of the Saxon shore, while Durovernum and Durobrivæ were little clusters of houses that had grown up at the passages of the Stour and the Medway. But in the valleys of these rivers population must have lain thickly; even the flats along the coast of the Thames were the scene of busy industries; and if the homesteads which studded the face of the country were smaller and less splendid than those of south-western Britain, their number, as well as the absence of the military stations that were so abundant elsewhere, shows the peace and prosperity of a district which its position sheltered from the Pietish forays that wasted the north and centre of the island.¹ The greater number of such houses

occupied a far smaller space of ground than our modern county of Kent; for the Weald, as yet uninvaded by axe or plough, threw its outskirts far and wide over the country on the south-west. Kemble, "Saxons in England," i. 483, says: "If we follow the main road from Hythe to Maidstone a little to the north of Aldington and running to the east of Boughton, we find a tract of country extending to the borders of Sussex and filled with places ending in 'den' or 'hurst' . . . along the edge of the Weald, within whose shades the 'swains' found 'mast and pasture.'" He enumerates a few of them which form a belt of mark or forest round the cultivated country quite independent of the woods which lay between village and village. Even within the bounds of the earlier Caint, too, the space fit for habitation was broken by thick woodlands like the Forest of Blean.

¹ See a paper on Roman Kent, by Roach Smith, in *Archæol. Cantiana*, II. xxxviii.

lay along what had been the line of Hengest's inroad, along the road from Canterbury to London, and along the banks of the Medway. The fields which then bordered the lower valley of this river at Upchurch furnished the bulk of the common hardware used throughout the country, and the extent of its remains shows that it was the home of a large working population.¹ Potteries hardly less extensive existed on the brink of Romney Marsh, while from pits at Dartford, Crayford, and Chislehurst, chalk was exported to Zeeland, on the coast of which are still found altars to the goddess of the Kentish chalk-workers.²

But with the conquest of the Jutes all this wealth and industry disappeared. The potteries sank into heaps of ruins amidst marshes that took the place of the meadows in which they stood. The country houses, as their ruins show, became heaps of blackened stone. The towns, as they fell beneath the conqueror's sword, were left burnt and desolate. The massacre which followed the victories of Hengest, indeed, showed the merciless nature of the warfare of the Jutes. While the wealthier Kentish landowners fled in panic over the sea, the poorer Britons took refuge in hill or forest, or among the neighbouring fastnesses of the Weald, till hunger drove them from their lurking-places to be cut down or enslaved by their con-

Kent after
 the
 Conquest.

¹ Wright's "Celt, Roman, and Saxon," pp. 260, 261.

² Murray's "Kent," Introduction, pp. x. xi.

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querors. It was in vain that some sought shelter within the walls of their churches, for the rage of the invaders seems to have burned fiercest against the clergy. The priests were slain at the altar, the churches fired, the peasants driven by the flames to fling themselves on a ring of pitiless steel.¹ For a while the ruin of the land must have seemed complete; and even when the settlement of the conquerors had brought a new life to its downs and river valleys, the wreck and solitude of the towns bore their witness to the completeness with which the older life had been done away. Durovernum remained a waste till Æthelberht's day, and it is not till the eighth century that we

¹ Gildas, Hist. cap. 24, 25. "Confovebatur namque, ultionis justæ præcedentium scelerum causâ, de mari usque ad mare ignis orientalis, sacrilegorum manu exaggeratus, et finitimas quasque civitates agrosque populans, qui non quievit accensus, donec cunctam pene exurens insulæ superficiem rubrâ occidentalem truceque oceanum linguâ delamberet. . . . Ita ut cunctæ columnæ crebris arietibus, omnesque coloni cum præpositis ecclesiæ, cum sacerdotibus ac populo, mucronibus undique micantibus, ac flammis crepitantibus, simul solo sternerentur, et miserabili visu, in medio platearum, ima turrium edito cardine evulsarum, murorumque celsum saxa, sacra altaria, cadaverum frusta, crustis ac semigelantibus purpurei cruoris tecta, velut in quodam horrendo torculari mixta viderentur, et nulla esset omnimodis, præter horribiles domorum ruinas, bestiarum volucrumque ventres, in medio sepultura. . . . Itaque nonnulli miserarum reliquiarum in montibus deprehensi acervatim jugulabantur; alii fame confecti accedentes, manus hostibus dabant, in ævum servituri, si tamen non continuo trucidarentur, quod altissimæ gratiæ stabat in loco; alii transmarinas petebant regiones, cum ululatu magno ceu celeusmatis vice, . . . alii montanis collibus, minacibus præruptis vallati, et densissimis saltibus, marinisque rupibus vitam, suspectâ semper mente, credentes, in patriâ licet trepidi perstabant."

hear of any new dwellers at Dover.¹ The sites of the deserted cities passed naturally into the common lands of the Cantwara, the folk-land which the Kentish king took for his own possession, or from which he made grants to his thegns; and it is thus that if we look in Æthelberht's day for the site of Regulbium we find it occupied by the king's "vill" of Reculver, while the Kentish Ceatta, no doubt through a royal grant, planted the "ham" which has grown into our Chatham on the banks of the Medway in the territory of the forsaken Durobrivæ. But even then he made his little settlement not within, but without its walls; and when the town reappears in the days of Æthelberht, it is no longer under its old name but under that of the Jutish Hrof who had at last taken it for his home, as Hrofes-ceaster,² or Rochester.

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As we stand amidst the ruins of such towns or country-houses, and recall the wealth and culture of Roman Britain, it is hard to believe that a conquest which left them heaps of crumbling stones was other than a curse to the land over which it passed. But if the new England that sprang from the wreck of Britain seemed for the moment a waste from which the arts, the letters, the refinement of the world had fled hopelessly away, it contained within itself germs of a nobler life than that which had been destroyed.³ Here,

The new
English
society.

¹ Malmesbury, "Life of Aldhelm" (Anglia Sacra, ii. 20).

² Eng. Chron. a. 604; Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 3.

³ In the sketch of our early institutions I have mainly

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as everywhere throughout the Roman world, the base of social life was the peasant, crushed by a deepening fiscal tyranny into the slave; while the basis of political life was the hardly less enslaved proprietor, disarmed, bound like his serf to the soil, and powerless to withstand the greed of a government in which he took no part. But, whether politically or socially, the base of the new English society was the freeman who had been tilling, judging, or fighting for himself by the Northern Sea. However roughly he dealt with the material civilization of Britain while the struggle went on, it was impossible that such a man could be a mere destroyer. War in fact was no sooner over than the warrior settled down into the farmer, and the home of the ceorl rose beside the heap of goblin-haunted stones that marked the site of the villa he had burned. The settlement of the conquerors was as direct a result of the character of the conquest as the withdrawal of the conquered people. It was the slowness of their advance, the small numbers of each separate band

followed the guidance of Professor Stubbs through the chapters which open his "Constitutional History." It must be remembered that we have little or no direct evidence for such a sketch, and can only infer the character of our institutions at this time, first, from the tenor of like German institutions in yet earlier days, and, secondly, from the character which English institutions had themselves assumed some centuries later, when we can trace their existing form in the laws. Although, however, some details may still remain doubtful, the general accuracy of the conclusions which historical inquiry has reached in this matter may be looked on as established.

in its descent upon the coast, that made it possible for the invaders to bring with them, or to call to them when their work was done, the wives and children, the læt and slave, even the cattle they had left behind them.¹ The wave of conquest was thus but a prelude to the gradual migration of a whole people.² For the settlement of the conquerors was nothing less than a transfer of English society in its fullest form to the shores of Britain. It was England that settled down on British soil, England with its own language, its own laws, its complete social fabric, its system of village life and village culture, its principle of kinship, its principle of representation. It was not as mere pirates or stray war-bands, but as peoples already made, and fitted by a common temper and common customs to draw together into one nation in the days to come, that our fathers left their homeland for the land in which we live

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At first sight, indeed, there seemed little promise of national unity in the mass of war-bands and folks that had taken the place of the Provincials. One half of conquered Britain belonged to the Engle; the bulk of the rest had fallen to the Saxon; Kent and the Isle of Wight belonged to the Jute. Other peoples of the German coast seemed to have joined in the work of conquest, for we may certainly add

Difficulties
of union.

¹ For the difference between the British and English cattle, see Boyd Dawkins, "Early Man in Britain," pp. 491, 492.

² Stubbs, Const. Hist. i. 72, 73.

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Frisians to the list of invaders, and probably Franks; but it was only as individual warriors or as separate war-bands that these can have joined in the invasion, and if any trace of their settlement existed it has wholly disappeared. But Jute, Engle, and Saxon were camped separately on the land, nor is there any ground for believing that in this earlier time they regarded themselves as a single people. Even within each of these three main tribes themselves there can have been little unity or cohesion. On the eastern coast we are distinctly told that war-band after war-band landed under their own ealdormen, conquered their own tracts, and fought with one another as well as with the Britons before they were drawn together into the folk of the East-Anglians. How universal this state of things must have been we see from the numerous traces of such small peoples that we incidentally meet with in our later history. A single list, for instance, which has been by chance preserved to us, hands down the names of some thirty tribes, apparently belonging for the most part to Mid-Britain, of the bulk of whom all knowledge is lost, though a few can still be identified by the geographical character of their names.¹ But for this we should know nothing of the existence of the Chilternsetna, or people of the

¹ See this list, which was originally printed by Sir Henry Spelman in his Glossary, under the head *Hida*, in Kemble's "Saxons in England," vol. i. pp. 81, 82.

Chilterns; of the Elmedsetna, or settlers in Elmet; of the Pecsetna, or that branch of the Mercians who colonized the fastnesses of the Peak; or the Wrokensetna, who found a home at the base of the Wrekin.¹

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Sporadic settlements of such isolated tribes, like the Meonwara on the Southampton Water, meet us constantly in the course of our story, and the dependent kingdoms within the larger ones, such as that of Oidilwald in the Deira of Oswiu's day,² point to the survival of this separate life in one quarter or another even when aggregation into larger groups had become an irresistible tendency in the people at large. Even in Kent, quickly as it was organized into a single kingdom, it would seem as if the conquerors originally clustered around king or ealdorman in little groups, which were only gradually gathered together into one political body. The dwellers in the reclaimed flats of Romney Marsh, for instance, were long known as the Mersewara, or Marsh-folk, a name which points to a separate political existence at some early time; while along the coast to the east of them we find in the name of Folkestone the trace of another separate folk, which may, like the Mersewara, have been only gradually drawn into the general community that knew itself as the

Separate
folks.

¹ The word in the list is Wokensetna; but a Mercian Charter (Cod. Dip. 277) has the word "Wreocensetun."

² Bæda, H. E. lib. iii. c. 23.

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Cantwara, or dwellers in the Caint. There are still stronger traces of separate life in the country west of the Medway, which was afterwards known as West Kent. In Kentish tradition this tract represented an earlier kingdom under the rule of its own chieftain, though dependent on the Kentish king; and the tradition is supported by the foundation of a separate Bishoprick at Rochester, whose prelates were dependent on the Kentish bishop at Canterbury.¹

Real unity.

But from the first the severance between such tribes must have been rather apparent than real. Even in their German homeland the ties of a common blood, common speech, common social and political institutions, were drawing the smaller peoples together into nations, such as the Allemannians, the Saxons, and the Franks, at the time when these adventurers pushed across the sea for the winning of Britain; and the tendency to union which they thus carried with them could only have been strengthened by the strife that followed. Their common warfare with the Briton could not but unite them more closely. If we judge from the names of English settlements, as from a few recorded incidents of the struggle, we

¹ Kemble, "Saxons in England," vol. i. p. 148, explains by this second Kentish kingdom the Kentish practice of two kings reigning together, as in the case of Eadric and Hlothere, or Wiltred and Æthelberht II. One of the later rulers, Sigired, calls himself "King of half Kent" (Cod. Dip. 110, 114), Malmesbury (Gest. Reg. lib. i. sec. 10) speaks of the "reguli" whom Æthelberht subdued.

should gather that each people gave help to its fellows in the course of the contest, that Jutish warriors fought in the host of Cerdic as it won the Gwent, and that Saxon war-bands aided in the reduction of East Anglia, as Engle war-bands helped in the Saxon victory over the Four Towns. How irresistible the tendency towards union was from the very beginning, indeed, we see from the fact that the separate existence of the smaller communities we have spoken of had for the most part come to an end by the close of the sixth century. At that time the various Jutish tribes of Kent, whatever may have been their original isolation, were definitely fused in the people of the Cantwara; while the Chilternsetna were lost in the West-Saxons, as the Pecsetna were lost in the Mercians. No traces of the separate war-bands that conquered the island-like district on the eastern coast of Britain reach us in the recorded annals of the East-Anglians. When written history first shows us the new Britain in the pages of Bæda, we find the original mass of folks and war-bands already gathered together in some eight or nine distinct peoples;¹ and even these showing a tendency to group themselves in three great masses which soon became the kingdoms of Northern, Central, and Southern Britain. To bring these three masses together into a single nation proved a longer and a harder task. But distinct as they

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¹ Bæda, H. E. lib. i. c. 15.

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remained for two hundred years we see no trace of consciousness of any race-difference between them. The lines of demarcation indeed which divide the one from the other are not race lines; the earliest of these over-kingdoms, that of Æthelberht, embraces Jute, Engle, and Saxon alike within its pale, and in the later contest for supremacy over Britain, the strife is not a twofold strife between Engle and Saxon, but a threefold strife of a purely political order, in which the Engle kingdoms of Northumbria and Mercia wage a fiercer fight against one another than that of either against the Saxons of the south. The only differences, in fact, that we can find between the various peoples who settle over the face of Britain are differences of dialect, or distinctions in the form of a buckle¹ or the shape of a grave-mound. As early as Bæda's day they had learned to recognize themselves under a single collective name, as the people of the English.² In the whole structure of their life, political, social, domestic, religious, all were at one.

Civilization
 of the
 English.

Of the character of their life at this early time we can only speak generally. Barbarous as it seemed to Roman eyes, it was already touched by

¹ Wright ("Celt, Roman, and Saxon," pp. 481-2) considers the round buckles as peculiar to the Jutes, the cross-shaped to the Engle.

² Bæda, H. E. i. 1, "quinque gentium linguis. . . Anglorum videlicet, Brittonum, Scottorum, Pictorum, et Latinorum."—Stubbs, Const. Hist. i. 143.

the civilization with which Rome was slowly transforming the barbaric world. Even in their German homeland, though its border nowhere lay along the border of the Empire, Saxon and Engle were far from being strange to the arts and culture of Rome. Roman commerce, indeed, reached the shores of the Baltic along tracks which had been used for ages by traders, whether Etruscan¹ or Greek; and we have abundant evidence that the arts and refinement of Rome were brought into contact with these men of the north. Brooches, sword-belts, and shield-bosses which have been found in Sleswick, and which can be dated not later than the close of the third century, are clearly either of Roman make or closely modelled on Roman metal-work;² and discoveries of Roman coins in Sleswick peat-mosses afford a yet more conclusive proof of direct intercourse with the Empire. But, apart from these outer influences, the men of the three tribes were far from being mere savages. They were fierce warriors, but they were also busy fishers and tillers of the soil, as proud of their skill in handling plough and mattock or steering the rude boat with which they hunted walrus and whale as of their skill in handling sword and spear.³ They were hard drinkers, no doubt, as they were hard toilers, and

¹ Boyd Dawkins, "Early Man in Britain," chap. xiii.

² Lubbock, "Prehistoric Times," pp. 9-11; Wright, "Celt, Roman, and Saxon," p. 498.

³ Beowulf, vv. 1090-1120.

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the "ale-feast" was the centre of their social life. But coarse as the revel might seem to modern eyes, the scene within the timbered hall which rose in the midst of their villages was often Homeric in its simplicity and dignity. Queen or Eorl's wife with a train of maidens bore ale-bowl or mead-bowl¹ round the hall, from the high settle of King or Ealdorman in the midst to the benches ranged around its walls, while the gleeman sang the hero-songs of his race. They had already a literature; and though the Roman missionaries had not as yet introduced their alphabet, the runic letters which these men shared with the other German races sufficed to record on tablets of oak or beech an epic such as that of Beowulf, or the rude annals which, as those preserved in our present Chronicle show, already existed as materials for history.² Dress and arms showed traces of a love of art and beauty, none the less real that it was rude and incomplete. Rings, amulets, ear-rings, neck pendants, proved in their workmanship the deftness of the goldsmith's art. Cloaks were often fastened with golden buckles of curious and exquisite form, set sometimes with rough jewels and inlaid with enamel.³ The bronze boar-crest on

¹ See the fine scene in Beowulf, vv. 1226 to 1254, where Hrothgar's queen bears the mead-cup about his hall to the warriors and the hero.

² Guest, "Early Eng. Settl.," *Origines Celticae*, ii. 161.

³ Large quantities of such ornaments have been found in the older barial-grounds, especially those of Kent. See the "Inven-

the warrior's helmet, the intricate adornment of the warrior's shield, tell, like the honour in which the smith was held, their tale of industrial art.¹ The curiously-twisted glass goblets, so common in the early graves of Kent, are shown by their form to be of English workmanship.² It is only in the English pottery, hand-made, and marked with zigzag patterns, that we find traces of rudeness.

The same indications of a life far higher than that of mere barbarism are to be seen in their literature. Among the scanty relics of our early poetry we still find a few pieces which date from a time before the conquest of Britain.³ Most of them are mere fragments; but even in these we find the two distinguishing features of our later verse—a tendency to melancholy and pathos, and a keen enjoyment and realization of outer nature.⁴

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Their
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torium Sepulchrale" of Bryan Faussett for an account of these objects and their discovery.

¹ Beowulf, vv. 612-615. Wright, "Celt, Roman, and Saxon," p. 486; Kemble, "Saxons in England," i. 280.

² Roach Smith, in Arch. Cantiana, i. 46; Wright, "Celt, Roman, and Saxon," 495, etc.

³ Such are "Deor's Complaint," a poem, says Mr. Sweet (in his sketch of the History of Anglo-Saxon Poetry in Hazlitt's edition of Warton's "History of English Poetry," 1871, Preface to vol. ii.), almost lyric in its character, in which Deor, a poet who has been supplanted by a rival, consoles himself by the thought of heroes who have borne and survived greater ills than he; the "Gleeman's Tale," which is possibly a poetic riddle; and a fragment on the attack of Fin's palace in Friesland.

⁴ See in Beowulf, vv. 2719 to 2756, the description of Grendel's abode, that "hidden land, where wolves lurk, windy nesses, perilous fen-tracts, where the mountain stream, shrouded in mists, pours down the cliffs, deep in earth. Not far from here stands the lake over-shadowed with groves of ancient trees,

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The one large and complete work which remains, the song of Beowulf, is the story of that hero's deeds; how alone at nightfall in King Hrothgar's hall he met the fiend Grendel, who for twelve years had carried off the king's warriors to devour them in his den; how to complete his victory he plunged into the dreadful lake where Grendel and Grendel's mother made their dwelling, and brought back their heads to Hrothgar; how, himself become a king, he is called in old age to meet a dragon that assails his people, forsaken by his comrades, and, though victorious, drained of his life-blood by the wounds he receives in the terrible grapple. The song as we have it now is a poem of the eighth century, the work it may be of some English missionary of the days of Bæda and Boniface, who gathered in the homeland of his race the legends of its earlier prime.¹ But the thin veil of

fast by their roots. There a dread fire may be seen every night shining wondrously in the water. The wisest of the sons of men knows not the bottom. When the heath-stalker, the strong-horned stag, hard pressed by the hounds, coursed from afar, seeks shelter in the wood, he will yield up his life on the shore sooner than plunge in and hide his head. That is an accursed place; the strife of waves rises black to the clouds when the wind stirs hostile storms, until the air darkens, the heavens shed tears."—Hazlitt's "Warton," vol. ii. *Introd.* by Mr. Sweet, p. 11.

¹ Mr. Sweet (Hazlitt's "Warton," vol. ii. p. 10) says: "It is evident that the poem, as we have it, has undergone considerable alterations. In the first place there is a distinctly Christian element, contrasting strongly with the general heathen current of the whole. Many of these passages are so incorporated into the poem that it is impossible to remove them without violent alterations of the text; others again are palpable interpolations. . . . Without these additions and alterations it is certain that

Christianity which he has flung over it fades away as we follow the hero-legend of our fathers; and the secret of their moral temper, of their conception of life, breathes through every line. Life was built with them, not on the hope of a hereafter, but on the proud self-consciousness of noble souls. "I have this folk ruled these fifty winters,"¹ sings the hero-king as he sits death-smitten beside the dragon's mound. "Lives there no folk-king of kings about me—not any one of them—dare in the war-strife welcome my onset! Time's change and chances I have abided, held my own fairly, sought not to snare men; oath never sware I falsely against right. So for all this may I glad be at heart now, sick though I sit here, wounded with death-wounds!" In men of such a temper, strong with the strength of manhood and full of the vigour and the love of life, the sense of its shortness and of the mystery of it all woke chords of a pathetic poetry. "Soon will it be," ran the warning rime, "that sickness or sword-blade shear thy strength from thee, or the fire ring thee, or the flood whelm thee, or the sword grip thee, or arrow hit thee, or age o'ertake thee, and thine eye's brightness sink down in darkness." Strong

we have in *Beowulf* a poem composed before the Teutonic conquest of Britain. The localities are purely continental; the scenery is laid among the Goths of Sweden and the Danes; in the episodes the Swedes, Frisians, and other continental tribes appear, while there is no mention of England, or the adjoining countries and nations."

¹ *Beowulf*, vv. 5458 to 5474.

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as he might be, man struggled in vain with the doom that encompassed him, that girded his life with a thousand perils and broke it at so short a span. "To us," cries Beowulf in his last fight, "to us it shall be as our Weird betides, that Weird that is every man's lord!" But the sadness with which they fronted the mysteries of life and death had nothing in it of the unmanly despair which bids men eat and drink for to-morrow they die. Death leaves man man, and master of his fate. The thought of good fame, of manhood, is stronger than the thought of doom. "Well shall a man do when in the strife he minds but of winning longsome renown, nor for his life cares!"¹ "Death is better than life of shame!"² cries Beowulf's sword-fellow. Beowulf himself takes up his strife with the fiend, "go the weird as it will." If life is short, the more cause to work bravely till it is over. "Each man of us shall abide the end of his life-work; let him that may work, work his doomed deeds ere death come!"³

Their
Religion.

It is in words such as these that we must look for the religious temper of Saxon or Engle, rather than in what is commonly called their religion. Their gods were the same as those of the rest of the German peoples, for though Christianity had won over the Roman Empire, it had not penetrated as yet into the forests of the north. Our own

¹ Beowulf, vv. 3073 to 3077. ² Beowulf, vv. 5774 to 5777.

³ Beowulf, vv. 2777 to 2780.

names for the days of the week still recall to us the deities whom our fathers worshipped. Wednesday is the day of Woden, the war-god, the guardian of ways and boundaries, the inventor of letters, the common god of the whole conquering people, and whom each of the conquering tribes held to be the first ancestor of its kings.¹ Thursday is the day of Thunder, the god of air, and storm, and rain; as Friday is Frea's day, a deity of peace, and joy, and fruitfulness, whose emblems, borne aloft by dancing maidens, brought increase to every field and stall they visited. Saturday may commemorate an obscure god, Sœtere; and some early worship of sun and moon perhaps left its trace in the names of Sunday and Monday;² while Tuesday was dedicated to Tiw, once like the Greek Zeus, with whose name his own is connected, the god of the sky, but who in later days sank into a dark and terrible deity to meet whom was death. Behind these floated dim shapes of an older mythology; Eostre, the god of the dawn or of the spring, who lent her name in after days to the Christian festival of the

¹ Bæda, H. E. i. 15. Woden was the ancestor of the royal stocks of Kent, East-Anglia, Essex, Mercia, Deira, Bernicia, by his sons Wehtha, Casere, Seaxnote, Weothelgeat, Wægðæg, and Bældæg; of the West-Saxons, by his great-grandson, Frothegar. The ealdormen of the Lindiswara claimed descent from his son Winta. (See Genealogies in Flor. Worc. ed. Thorpe, i. 248 *et seq.*)

² It is more probable, however, that when the Week passed from the Roman world into use among the Germans, these three names passed with it.

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Resurrection; Wyrd, the death-goddess, whose memory lingered long in the weird of northern superstition; or the Shield Maidens, the mighty women who, an old rime tells us, "wrought on the battle-field their toil, and hurled the thrilling javelins." Nearer to the popular fancy lay deities of wood and fell, like Nicor the water-sprite, who left his name to our nixies and "Old Nick," or hero-gods of legend and song. In the star-strown track of the Milky Way, our fathers saw a road by which the hero-sons of Waetla marched across the sky, and poetry only hardened into prose when they transferred the name of Watling Street to the great trackway which passed athwart the island they had won, from London to Chester. The stones of Weyland's Smithy still recall the days when the new settlers told one another on the conquered ground the wondrous tale they had brought with them from their German home, the tale of the godlike smith Weland, who forged the arms that none could blunt or break,¹ just as they told around Wadanbury and Wadanhlaew the strange tale of Wade and his boat.² When men christened mere and tree with Scyld's name, at Scyldsmere and Scyldstreow, they must have been familiar with the story of the godlike child who came over the waters to found the royal line of

¹ For Weland's story see "Exeter Book," p. 367; and Kemble, "Saxons in England," vol. i. p. 421.

² For Wade see Kemble, "Saxons in England," vol. i. p. 420.

the Gewissas.¹ So a name like Hnaefs-scylf shows that the tale of Hnaef was then a living part of English mythology;² and a name like Aylesbury may preserve the last trace of the legend told of Weland's brother, the sun-archer Ægil.

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But it is only in broken fragments that this mass of early faith and early poetry still lives for us, in a name, in the grey stones of a cairn, or in snatches of verse embodied in our older song. Like all ancient religion, indeed, such a faith, linking itself as it did with the new settlers mainly through the blood of their kings, embodied only in nature-myths or poetic legends, and without any moral significance for the guidance of men, had in it little of what the modern world means by a religion; and the faint traces of worship or of priesthood which we find in later history show how lightly it clung to the national life. There were temples, indeed, as we see in Kent, in Northumbria, and in East Anglia alike,³ rough wooden buildings in a hallowed inclosure, whose name of frith-geard or peace-yard tells of a right of sanctuary, and whose inner shrine inclosed images or emblems of the gods with altars before them. But at the conversion such buildings were changed, with no apparent shock to the popular conscience, into

Its weak
hold on
Englishmen.

¹ For Scyld's tale see *Beowulf*, vv. 7 to 104. Æthelweard, book iii. Malmesbury, "*Gesta Regum*," lib. ii. c. 116. Kemble, "*Saxons in England*," vol. i. p. 414.

² Hnaef, see *Beowulf*, line 2130 *et seq.*

³ Bæda, *H. E.* lib. i. c. 30; ii. 13, 15.

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Christian churches; and that right of sanctuary which the frith-geard possessed still clung to it under its new name of churchyard. There were priests, too, whom custom forbade to wield the warrior's weapon, or to mount the warrior's horse, but who played a prominent part not only in the religious but in the civil life of their fellow tribesmen.¹ The story, however, of the conversion of Britain to Christianity, which we have soon to follow, shows how little religious weight or influence these priests possessed. Only one of them, indeed, is mentioned as playing a part in the religious change, and he is an active agent in promoting it.²

Religion
and the
soil.

The weak hold of their religion on the new settlers strikes us as forcibly when we see how feebly their faith stamped itself on the face of the conquered country. Woden, indeed, the god of the race, left his name everywhere, on brook and pool and ford, on tree and barrow.³ We hear his name in Wansbrook or Woden's brook, in Wanspool and Wansford, as in Woden's tree or Wans-treow, and Woden's barrow or Wanborough. Above all, as the border-god he hallows the boundary lines that part tribe from tribe or conquered from conqueror. The long dyke that stretches from a point just south of Malmesbury by Bath to the Bristol Channel, which had been a

¹ Eddi's "Life of Wilfrid," c. 1 (Raine, "Historians of Church of York," vol. i. p. 20).

² Coiti, Beda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 13.

³ I follow here Kemble, "Saxons in England," i. cap. 12.

bound of the Belgæ, and may have served for a while as a bound of the West-Saxon, still retains the name which the last conquerors gave it, of the Woden's Dyke or Wansdyke. At an earlier stage of their advance, the Gewissas had halted on the crest of the great escarpment of the Wiltshire Downs, and here Wanborough, looking out over the Valley of the White Horse, marks the limits of Cynric's conquests.¹ But of his fellow-deities the traces are few. Thunder leaves signs of his worship in places like Thundersfield or Thundersley; and Pol, as the god whom the Northmen call Balder may have been styled on English ground, still lingers about us in our Polsteads and Poldons, our Polsleys and Polthorns. Even the lesser deities or fiends of popular fancy found hardly more numerous homes. Here and there a few names preserve the memory of the sacred stone, or mere, or tree, or mound, where men revered of old Scyld, the hero-child, or Ægil, the sun-archer, or shuddered at Grendel, the fiend. But like the names of greater gods, such names are thinly scattered over the soil. We feel as we glean them that we are not in presence of an indigenous religion; and it may be that in the weakness of its grip on the soil to which it had been transplanted we see one at least of the causes

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¹ We may add Wanborough, on the Hog's-Back of the North Downs, a spot which "in all probability has been a sacred site for every religion which has been received into Britain."—Kemble, i. 344.

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The
English as
warriors.

why the faith of the English yielded so easily to the Christian missionaries.

Of their military life we naturally know more than of their religious. We meet them first as seamen, and in spite of hasty assertions to the contrary, there never was a time from that age to this when Englishmen lost their love for the sea.¹ Everywhere throughout Beowulf's song, as everywhere throughout the life that it pictures, we catch the salt whiff of the sea. The warrior is as proud of his sea-craft as of his war-craft; sword in hand he plunges into the waves to meet walrus and sea-lion; he tells of his whale-chase amidst the icy waters of the north.² The same seafaring temper shows itself in later days in the very names of the bark that traverses the sea. In the fond playfulness of English verse the ship became the "wave-floater," the "foam-necked," "like a bird" as it skimmed the wave-crest, "like a swan" as its curved prow breasted the swan-road of the sea. With their landing in Britain, however, the purely seafaring life of the pirates was over, but they showed themselves none the less formidable as warriors on land. In his own eyes, indeed, every one of the conquerors of Britain was above all a warrior. The real opening of his life, his passing from boyhood to manhood, was the day when at

¹ The common statement which attributes our love of the sea to the coming of the Danes is a simple error.

² Beowulf, vv. 1070 to 1120.

the age of fifteen¹ the delivery of arms to him made him a full member of the folk as it made him a warrior of the host, or folk in arms. The armour of such a freeman has been preserved for us in the grave-mounds which are scattered over the face of England: the coat of ringed mail;² the long iron sword³ with its single edge, its hilt curiously wrought of silver or bronze, or scored with mystic runes,⁴ its wooden scabbard, tipped and edged with bronze; the short seax, at once dagger and knife, slung like the sword from the girdle; the long ashen spear; the small round "war-board" or shield of the yellow lime-wood with its iron boss, which was held in the warrior's hand; the skull-cap or helmet with the iron-

¹ At twelve (Ll. IIloth. et Ead. 6); then at twelve (Æthelstan II. c. i.); and then at fifteen (Æthelstan VI. 12). (Thorpe's "Ancient Laws," vol. i. pp. 31, 199, 241.)

² See Beowulf, v. 673, for the warriors' "grey sarks"; and cf. "Laws of Ine," 54 (Thorpe's "Ancient Laws," vol. i. p. 139).

³ "In the large broad-sword may be recognised the 'spatha' in common use by many of the Roman auxiliaries, and by the Romans themselves in later times. From their weight and length they could only be wielded by horsemen."—Roach Smith, on Anglo-Saxon remains at Faversham, etc. Archæol. Cantiana, i. 47. "The spear may be called the national weapon."—Ib. In the English grave-grounds two kinds of spears are found, one like the Roman pilum, another smaller and sligher, like the framea of Tacitus, which was part of the equipment of horsemen. The spear was valued above the sword. Ine's "Laws," 29 (Thorpe's "Ancient Laws," vol. i. p. 121).

⁴ Beowulf, line 3393, "So was on the surface of the bright gold with runic letters rightly marked, set, and laid, for whom that sword was first made, with hilt twisted and variegated like a snake."

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wrought figure of a boar above it. From the day of his arming with arms such as these, the training of the freeman was in war.¹ His very sports were of warlike sort. The wolf was still common, the bear yet lingered in the woods, the wild boar roused from its lair rushed madly on the huntsmen, the wild ox stood at bay in the forest depths. Often the chase was a mimic war; the wood was surrounded, and wild beast and deer were driven by the serfs into high-fenced inclosures, where the nobler huntsmen with bow and hunting-spear slew them at will.

Life itself
 warlike.

But this mimiery of war had soon to be exchanged for war itself. The world of these men was in fact a world of warfare; tribe warred with tribe, and village with village; even within the village itself feuds parted household from household, and passions of hatred and vengeance were handed on from father to son. To live at all, indeed, in this early world it was needful, if not to fight, at any rate to be ready to fight. It was by his own right hand that a man kept life and goods together; it was his own right hand that guarded him from wrong, or avenged him if wrong were done. Law had not as yet trodden the

¹ For early English arms see Wright, "Celt, Roman, and Saxon," pp. 470-478. The type of arms remained unaltered till the coming of the Danes. The axe, which was common enough among the Franks, is but seldom found even in Kent; elsewhere it is of the rarest occurrence. Arrow-heads, too, though sometimes found, are rare.

blood-feud under foot, or undertaken the task of carrying its own dooms into effect; it had done little more than give form to the right of personal vengeance.¹ And besides the world of social strife there was the wider field of public war, the fight of tribe with tribe, and people with people. It was by no chance that the Folk, when it gathered to the Folk-moot, gathered in arms,² that even the deliberations of the assembled tribesmen were the "rede" of warriors, and that the "aye, aye," with which they approved the counsel of the Ealdormen was half-drowned by the clash of spear on shield. The very form of a people was wholly military. The Folk-moot was in fact the war-host, the gathering of every freeman of the tribe in arms. The head of the Folk, whether Ealdorman or King, was the leader whom the host chose to command it. Its Witenagemot or meeting of wise men was the host's council of war, the gathering of those ealdormen who had brought the men of their villages to the field.

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The host was formed by levies from the various districts of the tribe; the larger of which may have owed their name of "hundreds" to the hundred warriors which each originally sent to it.³ In historic times, however, the regularity of such a military organization, if it ever existed, had

The Host.

¹ "Essays in Anglo-Saxon Law," cap. iv. "Legal Procedure."

² Stubbs, Const. Hist. i. 32.

³ Ibid. i. 81, 112.

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passed away, and the quotas varied with the varying custom of each district. But men, whether many or few, were still due from each district to the host, and a cry of war at once called tun-reeve and hundred-reeve with their followers to the field. However rude such a military organization may seem, it had in it qualities which no soldier will undervalue. Each group of warrior-kinsmen who fought in loose order round ealdorman or lord was bound together by the tie of blood, by the mutual trust of men who had been life-long comrades, by a life-long practice in arms, and by the discipline that comes of obedience habitually rendered to one who was recognized as a natural chief. But the strength of an English army lay not only in these groups of villagers. Mingled with them were the voluntary war-bands that gathered round distinguished chiefs. From the earliest times of German society it had been the wont of young men greedy of honour or seeking training in arms to bind themselves as "comrades" to king or chief.¹ The leader whom they chose gave them horses, arms, a seat in his mead hall, and gifts from his hoard. The "comrade" on the other hand—the *gesith* or *thegn*, as he was called—bound himself to follow and fight for his lord. The principle of personal dependence as distinguished from the warrior's general duty to the folk at large was embodied in the *thegn*.

¹ Stubbs, *Const. Hist.* i. 27.

“Chieftains fight for victory,” says Tacitus; “comrades for their chieftain.” When one of Beowulf’s “comrades” saw his lord hard bested “he minded him of the homestead he had given him, of the folk-right he gave him as his father had it; nor might he hold back then.” Snatching up sword and shield, he called on his fellow-thegns to follow him to the fight. “I mind me of the day,” he cried, “when we drank the mead, the day we gave pledge to our lord in the beer hall as he gave us these rings, our pledge that we would pay him back our war-gear, our helms and our hard swords, if need befell him. Unmeet it is, methinks, that we should bear back our shields to our home unless we guard our lord’s life.”¹

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It was this military organization of the tribe that gave from the first its form to the civil organization. In each of the little kingdoms which rose on the wreck of Britain, the host would camp on the land it had won, and the divisions of the host supplied here as in its older home a rough groundwork of local distribution. The land occupied by the hundred warriors who formed the unit of military organization became perhaps the local hundred; though it is needless to attach any notion of precise uniformity, either in the number of settlers or in the area of their settlement, to such a process as this, any more than to the army organization which the process of dis-

Organi-
zation of
the State.

¹ Beowulf, vv. 5259 *et seq.*

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tribution reflected.¹ From the large amount of public land which we find existing afterwards it has been conjectured with some probability that the number of settlers was far too small to occupy the whole of the country at their disposal, and this unoccupied ground became "folk-land," the common property of the tribe as at a later time of the nation.² What ground was actually occupied may have been assigned to each group and each family in the group by lot; and the little knots of kinsmen drew again together in "tun" and "ham" beside the Thames or the Trent, as they had settled beside the Elbe or the Weser. But the peculiar shape which the civil organization of these communities assumed was determined by a principle familiar to the Germanic races and destined to exercise a vast influence on the future of mankind. This was the principle of representation. The four or ten villagers who followed the reeve of each township to the general muster of the hundred were held to represent the whole body of the township from whence they came.³ Their voice was its voice, their doing its doing, their pledge its pledge. The Hundred-moot, a moot which was made by this gathering of the representatives of the townships that lay within its bounds, became in this way a court of appeal from the moots of each separate village as well as

¹ Stubbs, *Const. Hist.* i. 81, 82.

² *Ibid.* i. 82.

³ *Ibid.* i. 103.

of arbitration in dispute between township and township. The judgment of graver crimes and of life or death fell to its share; while it necessarily possessed the same right of law-making for the hundred that the village-moot possessed for each separate village.¹ And as hundred-moot stood above town-moot, so far above the hundred-moot stood the Folk-moot, the general muster of the people in arms, at once war-host and highest law-court and general Parliament of the tribe. But whether in Folk-moot or Hundred-moot, the constitutional forms, the forms of deliberation and decision, were the same. In each the priests proclaimed silence, the ealdormen of higher blood spoke, groups of freemen from each township stood round, shaking their spears in assent, clashing shields in applause, settling

¹ For the Hundred-moot, see Stubbs, *Const. Hist.* i. 119, 120. He adds, "In the south of England the names of the hundreds are often derived from those of the central towns; but in the midland and northern districts they seem like echoes of a wilder and more primitive society. The Yorkshire wapentake of Skyrack recalls the Shire Oak as the place of meeting; so in Derbyshire we have Appletree; in Hertfordshire, Edwinstree; in Herefordshire, Webtree and Greytree; in Worcestershire, Dodingtree; in Leicestershire, Gartree. Osgodcross, Ewcross, Staincross, Buckcross, mark centres of jurisdiction which received names after the acceptance of Christianity. Claro or Clarhow, in Yorkshire, was the moot-hill of its wapentake; similarly, Leicestershire has Sparkinlo; Norfolk, Greenlo and Grimshoe; and Lincolnshire, Calnodshoe. Others preserve the names of some ancient lord or hero, as the Worcestershire Oswaldslaw, and the Lincolnshire Aslaoe; or the holy well, as the Yorkshire Hallikeld. The Suffolk Thingoe preserves a reminiscence of the court itself as the Thing."

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matters in the end by loud shouts of "Aye" or "Nay."¹

It seems probable that the conquering tribes had hitherto known nothing of Kings in their own fatherland, where each was satisfied in peace time with the customary government of hundred-reeve or Ealdorman, while it gathered at fighting times under war-leaders whom it chose for each campaign. But in the long and obstinate warfare which they waged against the Britons it was needful to find a common leader whom the various tribes engaged in conquests such as those of Wessex or Mercia might follow; and the ceaseless character of a struggle which left few intervals of rest or peace raised these leaders into a higher position than that of temporary chieftains. It was no doubt from this cause that we find Hengest and his son Æsc raised to the kingdom in Kent, or Ælle in Sussex, or Cerdic and Cynric among the West Saxons. But, sprung as he was from war, the king was no mere war-leader, nor was he chosen on the ground of warlike merit. His office was not military but national; his creation marked the moment when the various groups of conquering warriors felt the need of a collective and national life; and the ground of his choice was his descent from the national god, Woden. As representing this national life, his rank was a permanent, not a temporary one: and the association of son with

¹ Stubbs, Const. Hist. i. 32.

father in the new kingship marked the hereditary character which distinguished it from the office of an Ealdorman.¹ The change was undoubtedly a great one, but it was less than the modern conception of kingship would lead us to imagine. Hereditary as the succession was within a single house, each successive king was still the free choice of his people, and for centuries to come it was held within a people's right to pass over a claimant too weak or too wicked for the throne. In war indeed the king was supreme. But in peace his power was narrowly bounded by the customs of his people and the rede of his wise men. Justice was not as yet the king's justice, it was the justice of village and hundred and folk in town-moot and hundred-moot and folk-moot. It was only with the assent of the wise men that the king could make laws and declare war and assign public lands and name public officers. Above all, should his will be to break through the free customs of his people, he was without the means of putting his will into action, for the one force he could call on was the host, and the host was the people itself in arms.

Directly, therefore, the new kingship made as yet little change in the political life of the conquering peoples. But indirectly it brought about from the first a great social change. An English community knew but two orders of men, the ceorl

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Eorl and
Ceorl.

¹ Stubbs, Const. Hist. i. 75-77.

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or the freeman, and the eorl or the noble.¹ The freeman was the base of the village society. He was the "free-necked man," whose long hair floated over a neck which had never bowed to a lord. He was the "weaponed man" who alone bore spear and sword, and who alone preserved that right of self-redress or private war which in such a state of society formed the main check upon lawless outrage.² But the social centre of the village was the eorl, or as he was sometimes called the ætheling, whose homestead rose high above the lowlier dwellings of the ceorls. It is possible that in the original formation of German society the eorl represented the first settler in the waste, while the ceorls sprang from descendants of this early settler who had in various ways forfeited their claim to a share in the original homestead, or more probably from incomers into the village who had since settled round it and been admitted to a share in the land and freedom of the community. But whatever may have been the origin of the distinction between freeman and noble, it had become a fixed element of their social order at the time when Engle and Saxon crossed into Britain. In every new settlement the eorl was distinguished from his fellow villagers by his wealth and his nobler blood, he was held by them

¹ Let and slave, of whom we speak later, did not belong to the community.

² Kemble, "Sax. in Engl." i. 131.

in an hereditary reverence, and it was from him and his fellow nobles that host-leaders, whether of the hundred or the tribe, were chosen in times of war.

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But with the rise of kingship a new social distinction began to grow up on the ground, not of hereditary rank in the community, but of service done to the king. It was from among the chiefs whose war-band was strongest that the leaders of the host were commonly chosen; and as these leaders grew into kings, the number of their thegns naturally increased. The rank of the "comrades" too rose with the rise of their lord. The king's thegns were his body-guard, the one force ever ready to carry out his will. They were his nearest and most constant counsellors. As the gathering of petty tribes into larger kingdoms swelled the number of eorls in each realm and in a corresponding degree diminished their social importance, it raised in equal measure the rank of the king's thegns. A post among them was soon coveted and won by the greatest and noblest. Their service was rewarded by exemption from the general jurisdiction of hundred-moot or folk-moot, for it was part of a thegn's meed for his service that he should be judged only by the lord he served. Other meed was found in grants of public land which made thegns a local nobility, no longer bound to actual service in the king's household or in the king's

The Thegn.

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war-band, but still bound to him by personal ties of allegiance far closer than those which bound an eorl to the chosen war-leader of his tribe. In a word, thegnhood contained within itself the germ of the later feudalism which was to battle so fiercely with the Teutonic freedom out of which it grew.¹

The
 Township.

To view, however, the new settler in Britain simply as a warrior would be false and incomplete. In the old world the divorce which modern society has established between the soldier and the citizen, the fighter and the toiler, did not exist. No chasm parted war from civil life: the solemn arming made the young Englishman not only a warrior but a freeman,² a man of the folk, a tiller with a right to his share in field and pasture and waste, a ruler of his village, with his own due place in village-moot and hundred-moot. The unit of social life, indeed, was the cluster of such farmers' homes, each set in its own little croft, which made up the Township or the tun. The tun was surrounded by an earthen mound tipped with a stockade or quickset hedge, as well as defended externally by a ditch:³ and each township was

¹ For Thegnhood, see Stubbs, *Const. Hist.* i. 27, 28, 175-85; Kemble, "Sax. in Engl." i. 162 *et seq.*

² "The young men are, till they are admitted to the use of arms, members of the family only, not of the state."—Stubbs, *Const. Hist.* i. 24.

³ "The tun," says Professor Stubbs, *Const. Hist.* vol. i. p. 93, *note*, "is originally the inclosure or hedge, whether of the single farm or the inclosed village; as the burh is the fortified house of the powerful man."

thus a ready-made fortress in war, while in peace its intrenchments were serviceable in the feuds of village with village, or house with house. The importance of its defences, indeed, was shown by the customary law which forced every dweller within them to take part in their rearing and repair.¹ Inside the mound lay the homes of the villagers, the farm-steads, with their barns and cattle stalls; and in the centre of them rose the sacred tree or mound where the village with its elders met in the tun-moot which gave order to their social and industrial life. Outside the mound in close neighbourhood to the village lay the home pastures and folds, where the calves and lambs of individual cultivators were reared. In these, and in the "yrfeland," or "family estate," held apart from the lands of his fellow-freemen by the ætheling or noble,² we find the first traces of a personal property strongly in contrast with the common holding which prevailed through the rest of the township.³ Beyond and around these home-pastures lay the village plough-land, generally massed together in three or four large "fields," each of which was broken by raised balks into long strips of soil that were distributed, in turn,

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¹ "Laws of Æthelstan," i. 13; Thorpe's "Laws and Institutes," i. 207; Stubbs, *Const. Hist.* i. 87.

² "Essays in Anglo-Saxon Law" (Boston, 1876), p. 55, etc.

³ Nasse, in his "Land Community of the Middle Ages" (Cobden Club, 1871), pp. 15-30, gives a full account of this village system of common holding in early England.

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among the village husbandmen. The whole was inclosed by a borderland or mark, which formed the common pasture where flock and herd could be turned out by every freeman to graze, though in numbers determined by usage or the rede of the village-moot.¹

Its
boundaries.

For the most part each township lay, no doubt, within the area of older British or Roman settlements, but its bounds were no longer marked by the measurements and the landmarks of the Roman surveyor. As in many of our modern settlements, where population and property have hardly come into being, the boundary line could only be drawn from one natural object to another. In a country where woodland was so frequent, the mark-tree could not fail to be common,² and the

¹ Beside the free township, there were, no doubt from the earliest times, townships which had grown up round the house of a noble, or ætheling, and which was tenanted by his dependants. In such cases, however, as yet, the village organization was little affected by the lord's neighbourhood; he no doubt named its reeve; but the reeve and the men of the township judged according to custom, and distributed lands as in other townships.—Stubbs, *Const. Hist.* i. 93-4. The land itself, however, was in such a case the lord's, and not the common freehold of the villagers; and would, no doubt, be held from the first by them subject to service on the portion which the lord held in his personal possession. In later times the dependent townships became an important body; but in the first days of the settlement they were probably exceptional. Palgrave, however, regarded them as from the first the common form of English holding ("Commonwealth," i. p. 65).

² The trees most frequently named in these land-boundaries are the oak, ash, beech, thorn, elder, lime, and birch.—Kemble, "*Saxons in England*," vol. i. p. 52, *note*.

need of forming a boundary line may have combined with some survival of the older tree-worship in the dedication of such objects to hero or lord. We hear of Scyld's tree, and Nicor's thorn, of Tiw's thorn, or Freya's tree, as landmarks of districts or estates; the special god of border and mark gave his name to the Woden's oak or the Woden's stock;¹ while sometimes what must have been a sacred group of trees, as in the Kentish Seven-oaks, forms a starting-point for the border lines of more than one district. The choice of burial-mounds or burial-places, which was almost as common, may have been dictated by like mingled motives of convenience and religion; but for the most part the boundary track runs naturally enough from one feature of the landscape to another, from the "marked oak," along the "marked eaves," or edges of forest or copse, by the "border brook," and over the hero's "hlaew" or burial-mound to the "grey stones" that pointed back to a primæval eld.²

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If we pass from the township to the homes within its bounds, we see the freeman himself in that outer garb of peace and industry which has been brought down to us by the ploughman and peasant of to-day, in his smock-froek, a coarse linen overcoat that fell to the knees, and whose tight sleeves and breast were worked with elaborate

The
Freeman's
home.

¹ Kemble, *Cod. Dip.* 436, 268, 174, 262, 496, 287.

² Kemble, "Saxons in England," 52, *note* 4.

embroidery.¹ Feet and legs were wrapped in linen bands, cross-gartered and party-coloured, as high as the knees;² a hood sheltered the head in winter-tide; and among the nobles or wealthier ceorls, a short cloak of blue cloth, often embroidered with fanciful figure-work, and fastened at the shoulder with a costly buckle, was thrown over the frock for warmth or ornament.³ The house of such a villager naturally varied in size and importance with the wealth and rank of its owner. Dwellings were everywhere of wood.⁴ Even in the wealthier Roman villas only the substructures seem to have been of stone or brick; and the new settlers, accustomed to wooden dwellings in their own land, found in Britain a wealth of forest and woodland which supplied abundant material for construction near every township.⁵ The centre of the homestead was the hall, with the hearth-fire

¹ It was only in texture and colour that this dress differed in different classes of society. It was either of linen or wool. (Beda, H. E. iv. 19.) The noble was distinguished from the ceorl by his embroidered belt and golden sword-hilt.—Kemble, "Saxons in England," vol. ii. p. 145.

² Hosen were sometimes made of hide softened with grease or fat (Beda, Vit. Cuthbert, c. xviii.).

³ The love of bright and varied colours was strong in both men and women; in later days monasticism had no harder battle to fight than in bringing its votaries to protect themselves with the undyed vestments required by its rule. (See Cuthbert's struggle for this at Lindisfarne, Beda, "Opera Minora," Stevenson, p. 82.) And down to the very era of the Danish wars, saints and councils were busy denouncing the silken hoods and the gaily-coloured leg-bands, which broke even the garb of the English clergy.

⁴ Beda, H. E. ii. 14; iii. 16, 17.

⁵ As the country was cleared, the "*silva infructuosa*" or

in the midst of it,¹ whose smoke made its escape as best it could through a hole in the roof. The hall, indeed, was the common living-place of all the dwellers within the house. Here the "board," set up on trestles when needed, furnished a rough table for the family meal; and when the board was cleared away, the women bore² the wooden beer-cups or drinking-horns to the house-master and his friends as they sat on the settles or benches ranged round the walls,³ while the gleeman sang his song,⁴ or the harp was passed around from hand to hand.⁵ Here, too, when night came and the fire died down, was the common sleeping-place, and men lay down to rest on the bundles of straw which they had strewn about its floor.⁶

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Beside the hall stood chambers for women and the household, while around the farm-yard were stable and threshing-floor and barn. With so thin

The Farm.

wood reserved on every farm for building and fencing, became of increasing importance, as is shown by the laws against cutting down or burning trees, as well as by the inclusion of such woods in the Domesday survey.

¹ Bæda, H. E. iii. 10.

² Bæda, Vit. Cuthb. c. xxix. H. E. v. 4.

³ For washing of guests' hands and feet, see Bæda, Vit. Cuthb. c. xxix. For the banquet and drinking-bouts, Eddi, "Life of Wilfrid," c. xvi. "convivium trium dierum et noctium."

⁴ For gleemen and buffoons, Beowulf, vv. 2134 *et seq.* A council at Gloucester in 747 classes among "ludiarum artium" those of "poetarum, citharistarum, musicorum, scurrorum."—Haddan and Stubbs, "Councils," iii. 369.

⁵ See Cædmon's story, *postea*. Dunstan in later days carries his harp in his hand on visits, and loves "carmina gentilitatis" and "nænia."

⁶ Beowulf, vv. 1381-1385.

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and scattered a population, and at a time when even internal trade had hardly begun to exist, the homestead had to be in the main its own provider: the grain had not only to be sown and reaped but to be made into bread in the household, as the flax was not only gathered but woven into garments. To woman fell much of the outer and almost all this inner farm work. It was she who milked the kine and shorn the sheep, who made the cheese and combed the wool and beat the flax; while her name of the "spinster" still reminds us how she spun the thread and wove the wool of every garment.¹ The buildings in which this work went on lay round each larger homestead; the mill for grinding the "grits" or rough corn and the finer wheat-meal,² the oven where the loaf was baked, common loaf, or alms loaf, or white bread of pure wheat, or raised loaf and cake,³ the sheds for storing wool and honey and wax,⁴ the malt-house and the brewery, with its bright ale, and mild ale, and smooth ale, and beer,⁵ the dairy with its butter and its cheese.⁶

¹ Among the poetic names for woman was "freoðowebbe," the "weaver of peace," which reminds us of her subtler influence as reconciler in the home. *Beowulf*, v. 3880.

² *Cod. Dip.* 166, 226.

³ *Cod. Dip.* 226, 235.

⁴ *Cod. Dip.* 288, 313, 231-235.

⁵ We hear of all these varieties as early as the seventh century, as well as of Welsh ale and sweetened Welsh ale. *Cod. Dip.* 166, 1088. Wine may have been introduced by the Christian missionaries, but it was in use in very early times. *Beda*, H. E. lib. i. c. 1.

⁶ *Cod. Dip.* 135, 288. *Ine's Laws*, sec. 70; Thorpe, "*Laws and Institutes*," vol. i. p. 147.

The outer work of the farm fell upon the freeman and his serfs. Ox-herd and cow-herd, shepherd and goat-herd, the swine-herd who drove the hogs into forest and woodland to feed on the oak-mast, the barn-man and the sower, were serfs in wealthier households, or on the estate of the lord who had gathered a township about him; but in the free townships the poorer freeman must have been his own labourer, and the toil necessitated by the system of common culture was severe. The open lands of the common pasture were often far from any homestead, so that through the long winter nights, from Martinmas to Easter, the villagers had to take their turn in folding and guarding the horses and cattle that pastured on them. The need of fencing off the common meadow into separate grass fields when the grass began to grow afresh in the spring was a yet more serious burden;¹ and besides all these the villager had to help in the maintenance of mound and ditch around the townships, as well as to be ready when occasion called to join the hue and cry in chase of stolen cattle, or to follow the reeve of his township to hundred-moot or folk-moot.

The dwellers in such a township were not men The Kin.

¹ "If ceorls have a common meadow, or other partable land, to fence, and some have fenced their part, some have not, and strange cattle come in and eat up the common corn or grass, let those go who own the gap and make compensation to the others."—Laws of Ine, iii. 42; (Thorpe's "Laws and Institutes," vol. i. p. 129).

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who had casually come together. As the blood-bond gave its form to English warfare, so it gave its form to English society. Kinsmen, as we have seen, fought side by side in the hour of battle, and the feelings of honour and discipline which held the host together were drawn from the common duty of every man in each little group of warriors to his house. And as they fought side by side on the field, so they dwelt side by side on the soil. Harling abode by Harling, and Billing by Billing, and each "wick" and "ham" and "stead" and "tun" took its name from the kinsmen who dwelt together in it. In this way the house or ham of the Billings was Billingham, and the tun or township of the Harlings was Harlington.¹ The life of the individual freeman indeed was all but lost in that of the family.² When he was a child his kinsmen were bound by custom to watch over and guard him from wrong, even should the wrong be at his father's hand. When he wedded,

¹ Professor Stubbs (Const. Hist. vol. i. p. 92) says: "In England it is probable that all the primitive villages in whose name the patronymic syllable 'ing' occurs, were originally colonized by communities united either really by blood or by the belief in a common descent." See too, Kemble, "Saxons in England," vol. i. p. 234, etc., and Robertson, "Scotland under Early Kings," vol. ii. App. F. "The Kin." The settlement of these groups of kinsmen was probably determined by lot. When Cuthbert's relics found a home at Durham, the woodland around was parted in this way among the new settlers. See Sim. Dur. Hist. Dunelm. Ecc. sec. 37: "Eradicata undique silva et unicuique mansionibus sorte distributis." Larger divisions of country, such as the Rapes of Sussex, bear traces of the same mode of distribution.

² "Essays in Anglo-Saxon Law" (Boston, 1871), 121 *et seq.*

it was among the kinsfolk that he had to find him sureties and witnesses. If a blood-feud sprang up, the kin were bound to give life and limb in his defence. Should he be slain, it was for them to avenge his slaying. Order and law itself rested not on a man's personal action, but on the blood-bond that knit him to his kin. Every outrage was held to have been done by all who were linked in-blood to the doer of it; every crime to have been done against all who were linked in blood to the sufferer from it. From this sense of the value of the family bond as a means of restraining the wrong-doer by forces which the tribe as a whole did not as yet possess sprang the first rude forms of English justice. The freeman's life and the freeman's limb had each its legal price.¹ "Eye for eye," and "limb for limb," ran the rough customary code, or for each fair damages. This price of life or limb, however, was paid not by the wrong-doer to the man he wronged, but by the kin or family of the wrong-doer to the kin or family of the wronged. The loss, and so the right to revenge, or to the "blood-wite" by which that right could be bought off, were the loss and the right not of the individual freeman but of his kin. Each kinsman was his kinsman's keeper, bound to protect him from wrong, to hinder him from

¹ "The Laws of Æthelberht," the first English writing down of customary law, are little more than a list of the fines due for harm to life and limb.

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wrong-doing, and to suffer with him and pay for him if wrong were done. So fully was this principle recognized that even if any man was charged before his fellow-tribesmen with crime his kinsfolk still remained in fact his sole judges; for it was by their solemn oath of his innocence or his guilt that he had to stand or fall.

The Land.

The tie of blood, however, was widened by the larger tie of land. Land with the German race seems at a very early time to have become everywhere the accompaniment of full freedom.¹ The freeman was strictly the freeholder, and the exercise of his full rights as a free member of the community to which he belonged became inseparable from the possession of his "holding" in it. But property had not as yet reached the stage of absolutely personal possession. The woodland and pasture-land of an English village were still undivided, and every free villager had the right of turning into it his cattle or swine. The meadow-land lay in like manner open and undivided from hay-harvest to spring. It was only when grass began to grow afresh that the common meadow was fenced off into grass-fields, one for each household in the village; and when hay-harvest was over fence and division were at an end again. The plough-land alone was permanently allotted in equal shares both of corn-land and fallow-land to the families of the freemen, though

¹ Stubbs, Const. Hist. i. 84, 199.

even the plough-land was subject to fresh division as the number of claimants grew greater or less.¹

It was this sharing in the common land which marked off the freeman or ceorl from the unfree man or læt, the tiller of land which another owned.

As the ceorl was the descendant of settlers who whether from their earlier arrival or from kinship with the original settlers of the village had been admitted to a share in its land and its corporate life, so the læt was a descendant of later comers to whom such a share was denied, or in some cases perhaps of earlier dwellers from whom the land had been wrested by force of arms. In the modern sense of freedom the læt was free enough. He had house and home of his own, his life and limb were as secure as the ceorl's—save as against his lord; it is probable from what we see in later laws that as time went on he was recognized as a

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The Unfree.

¹ Stubbs, *Const. Hist.* i. 56, 57; and see Nasse, "Land Community of the Middle Ages," 15-30. Traces of this common culture lasted here and there to very recent times. Some thirty years ago, on the Yorkshire wolds, "each farmer owned a certain number of 'ox-gangè' (a word still to be heard now and then from the mouths of old labourers), and lines of ancient balks and plough-lands, some straight, some curiously curved, still exist in places. The common pasture or meadow was divided into portions, each of which changed hands annually, and each had cut on a turf a distinguishing mark—as an arrow, a triangle, or a circle. At the harvest feast a number of apples, each marked in a corresponding fashion to one of the 'dæls,' or divisions, were thrown into a tub of water. Each farmer then dived for an apple, and the mark which it carried indicated the 'dæl' which was to be his for the coming year. The Dolemoors in Somersetshire were managed in a similar way, save that the change was for a longer period."—Murray's "Yorkshire," p. 161.

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member of the nation, summoned to the folk-moot, allowed equal right at law, and called like the full freeman to the hosting. But he was unfree as regards lord and land. He had neither part nor lot in the common land of the village. The ground which he tilled he held of some freeman of the tribe to whom he paid rent in labour or in kind. And this man was his lord. Whatever rights the unfree villager might gain in the general social life of his fellow countrymen, he had no rights as against his lord. He could leave neither land nor lord at his will. He was bound to render due service to his lord in tillage or in fight. So long, however, as these services were done the land was his own. His lord could not take it from him; and he was bound to give him aid and protection in exchange for his services.¹

The Slave.

Far different from the position of the læt was that of the slave, though there is no ground for believing that the slave class was other than a small one. It was a class which sprang mainly from debt or crime. Famine drove men to "bend their heads in the evil days for meat:" the debtor, unable to discharge his debt, flung on the ground his freeman's sword and spear, took up the labourer's mattock, and placed his head as a slave within a master's hands. The criminal whose kinsfolk would not make up his fine became a crime-serf of the plaintiff or the king. Sometimes

¹ For Læt, see Stubbs, *Const. Hist.* i. 25, 52, 73, and *note*.

a father pressed by need sold children and wife into bondage. In any case the slave became part of the live stock of his master's estate, to be willed away at death with horse or ox, whose pedigree was kept as carefully as his own. His children were bondsmen like himself; even a free-man's children by a slave mother inherited the mother's taint. "Mine is the calf that is born of my cow," ran an English proverb. It was not indeed slavery such as we have known in modern times, for stripes and bonds were rare: if the slave was slain, it was by an angry blow, not by the lash. But his master could slay him if he would; it was but a chattel the less. The slave had no place in the justice court, no kinsmen to claim vengeance or guilt-fine for his wrong. If a stranger slew him his lord claimed the damages; if guilty of wrong-doing, "his skin paid for him" under his master's lash. If he fled he might be chased like a strayed beast, and when caught he might be flogged to death. If the wrong-doer were a woman she might be burned.¹

With the public life of the village however the slave had nothing, the læt in early days little, to do. In its Moot, the common meeting of its villagers for justice and government, a slave had no place or voice, while the læt was originally represented by the lord whose land he tilled. The

The
 Tun-Moot.

¹ For the slave, see Stubbs, "Const. Hist." i. 89; Kemble, "Sax. in Engl." i. 185, etc.

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life, the sovereignty of the settlement was solely in the body of the freemen whose holdings lay round the moot-hill or the sacred tree where the community met from time to time to order its own industry¹ and to make its own laws. Here new settlers were admitted to the freedom of the township, and bye-laws framed and headman and tithing-man chosen for its governance. Here plough-land and meadow-land were shared in due lot among the villagers, and field and homestead passed from man to man by the delivery of a turf out from its soil. Here strife of farmer with farmer was settled according to the "customs" of the township as its elder men stated them, and four men were chosen to follow headman or calldorman to hundred-court or war. It is with a reverence such as is stirred by the sight of the head-waters of some mighty river that one looks back to these village-moots of Friesland or Sles-

¹ There is no ground for believing that the "tun-moot" was a judicial court. Its work was the ordering of the village life and the village industry; and traces of this still survive in our institutions. "The right of the markmen to determine whether a new settler should be admitted to the township exists in the form of admitting a tenant at the court baron and customary court of every manor: the right of the markmen to determine the 'bye-laws,' the local arrangement for the common husbandry, or the fencing of the hay-fields, or the proportion of galls to be turned into the common pasture, exists still in the hundredal courts and in the meetings of the townships; the very customs of relief and surrender, which are often regarded as distinctly feudal, are remnants of the polity of the time when every transfer of property required the witness of the community to whose membership the new tenant was thereby admitted." — Stubbs, "Const. Hist." i. 95, 96.

wick. It was here that England learned to be a "mother of Parliaments." It was in these tiny knots of husbandmen that the men from whom Englishmen were to spring learned the worth of public opinion, of public discussion, the worth of the agreement, the "common sense," the general conviction to which discussion leads, as of the laws which derive their force from being expressions of that general conviction. A humourist of our own day has laughed at Parliaments as "talking shops," and the laugh has been echoed by some who have taken humour for argument. But talk is persuasion, and persuasion is force, the one force which can sway freemen to deeds such as those which have made England what she is. The "talk" of the village moot, the strife and judgment of men giving freely their own rede and setting it as freely aside for what they learn to be the wiser rede of other men, is the groundwork of English history.

CHAPTER V

THE STRIFE OF THE CONQUERORS

577—617

English and
Britons.

IMPORTANT as was the battle of Deorham in marking the point of transition between the earlier age of conquest and the age of settlement which followed it, it is of hardly less importance as marking a new point of departure in the political relations of the conquerors themselves. Nothing can be more remarkable than the change which from this moment passes over their relations to the conquered people. Till now, as we have seen, the war between Englishmen and Welshmen had been a war of extermination. Eastward of the line which the English sword had drawn across the island no trace was left of Roman or of British life; and westward of it, in the half of Britain that still remained unconquered, there was no thought of submission to or intercourse with the conquerors. The force of the Roman past was seen in the attitude which the Britons preserved towards their

English assailants. In our anxiety to know more of our fathers, we listen to the monotonous plaint of Gildas with a strange disappointment. Gildas must have witnessed much of the invasion ;¹ but we look in vain through his book for any account of the life or settlement of Saxon or Engle or Jute. He tells us nothing of their fortunes or of their leaders. A new people was growing up in the conquered half of Britain, but across the border of this new people Gildas gives us but a glimpse, doubtless he had but a glimpse himself, of forsaken walls, of shrines polluted with heathen impiety. His silence and ignorance mark the character which the struggle preserved up to the close of the sixth century. The Briton had been driven by the sword from much of British soil. But, beaten as he was, he yet remained unconquered. No British neck had as yet bowed in willing slavery before the English invader ; and the provincials still looked down on their assailants with the scorn with which Rome had looked down on them in the very height of its power. They still held the struggle to be one of civilization against barbarism. To the Britons the English invaders remained "barbarians," "wolves," "dogs," "whelps from the kennel of barbarism," "hateful to God and to man."² Their victories were

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¹ His work dates from about 560, but he had quitted Britain some thirty years before.

² Gildas, Hist. 23: "ferocissimi illi nefandi nominis Saxones, Deo hominibusque invisi, quasi in caulas lupi . . .

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accepted as triumphs of the power of evil, as chastisements of a divine justice for national sin. But their ravage, terrible as it was, was held to be almost at an end; in another century, so ran Welsh prophecies, their last hold on the land would be shaken off.

Beino.

Legend, if it distorts facts, preserves accurately enough the impressions of a vanished time; and in the legend of St. Beino we catch a glimpse of the chasm that parted the two races at this period. Beino had settled with some monkish followers in a solitary retreat in the west of our Herefordshire. "And on a certain day, as Beino was travelling near the river Severn, where was a ford, lo! he heard a voice on the other side of the river, inciting dogs to hunt a hare; the voice being that of a Saxon who spoke as loud as he could 'Cirgia' (charge), which in that language incited the dogs. And when Beino heard the voice of the Saxon, he immediately returned, and coming to his disciples said to them, 'My sons, put on your clothes and your shoes, and let us leave this place, for the nation of this man has a strange language, and is abominable, and I heard his voice on the other side of the river inciting the dogs after a hare. They have invaded this place and it will be theirs, and they will keep it in their possession.' And then Beino said to one of his disciples, Bithylint

*grex catulorum de cubili lænæ barbariæ . . . canum catas-
tam."*

was his name, 'My son,' said he, 'be obedient to me; I wish that thou wilt remain here. My blessing shall be with thee. And the cross which I have made I will leave with thee.' And the blessing of Beino bound that disciple and he remained there. And Beino and his disciples came as far as Meivon, and there he remained with Tysilio forty days and forty nights. And from thence he came to King Cynan, son of Brochwel, and he requested a place to pray for his soul, and that of his friends. And the king gave to him Gwydelwerum, in Merionethshire."¹

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But with the battle of Deorham this absolute severance between the one race and the other comes almost suddenly to an end. In a few years we find the Welshmen of the west in alliance with and even fighting by the side of their assailants of the east. It is possible that its British inhabitants had never been driven from the soil which Ceawlin won in the lower Severn valley; it was at any rate but a short while after their settlement that the West-Saxon settlers in this district were leagued with the Welsh for the overthrow of Ceawlin. Such a league took a yet more marked form when Penda and the Englishmen of Mid-Britain marched side by side with Welshmen in

End of ex-
termination
of Britons.

¹ "Lives of Cambro-British Saints," by Rev. W. J. Rees, p. 301. The Welsh text is given at p. 15. Like most of the Welsh hagiographies, Beino's life in its present form is of the twelfth century, but like its fellows it is clearly founded on old materials.

CHAP. V. their attack on Northumbria. Junctions such as
 The Strife of the Conquerors these show that the older wars of extermination
 577-617. had come to an end, and that the hostility of the
 two races was henceforth to sink down into the
 common hostility of neighbouring peoples. But
 we have more direct proof that the Britons were
 no longer driven from the soil by their assailants
 in the conquests which the Northumbrian King
 Æthelfrith was soon to win from the Britons of
 Strathclyde. "He wasted the race of the Britons
 more than any chieftain of the English had done,"
 says Bæda, "for none drove out or subdued so
 many of the natives or won so much of their
 land for English settlement, or made so many
 tributary to Englishmen."¹ The policy of accept-
 ing the submission and tribute of the Welsh, but
 of leaving them on the conquered soil, became,
 indeed, from this moment the invariable policy of
 the invaders; and as the invasion pushed further
 and further to the west an ever-growing proportion
 of the Britons remained mingled with the con-
 querors. We see this strongly brought out in one
 of these western districts. By a long series of
 victories, a series spreading over the space of a
 hundred and thirty years, the West-Saxons at last
 became masters of the country which now bears
 the name of Somerset, the land of the Somers-
 setas. Each successive wave of invasion has left
 its mark in the local names of the district over

¹ Bæda, H. E. lib. i. c. 34.

which it passed; and the varying proportion of these to the Celtic or other non-English names around them throws some light on the varying character of the conquest. We may take as a rough index the well-known English termination "ton." North of Mendip—in the country which had been won in the early days of West-Saxon invasion—this bears to all other names the proportion of about a third. Between Mendip and the Parrett, in the conquests of Centwine, it reaches only a fourth. Across the Parrett, but east of the road from Watchet to Wellington, the proportion decreases to a fifth; and westward of this it becomes rapidly rarer, and varies in different districts from an eighth to a tenth. In other words the British population, which had withdrawn before the sword of Ceawlin, rested in quiet subjection beneath the sword of Ine. The change is yet more strongly marked by Ine's laws. In these the Briton is recognized as a subject of the State and as entitled to claim legal protection for life and limb.

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But the battle of Deorham marked more than a change in the relation of the conquered to the conquerors. It marks a change in the relations of the conquerors themselves. From this moment the strife of Englishman and Briton, though far from having reached its close, sinks into comparative unimportance; and what plays the first part in English politics for the next two hundred years is the strife of Englishman with Englishman. However wearisome such a strife may seem, it

Change in
relations of
conquerors.

CHAP. V. was of vital import to the after history of the
The Strife country, for it was only by hard fighting that the
of the relative weight of the conquering peoples could
Conquerors be determined, and a centre of supremacy estab-
577-617. lished round which the various tribes that had
shared in the winning of Britain could gather into
a nation. Till now no national idea had shown
itself in the new England. All the kingdoms
which had been built up by the invaders stood
on a footing of equality. All had taken an
independent share in the work of conquest.
Although the oneness of a common blood and a
common speech was everywhere recognized, we
find no traces of any common action or common
rule. Even in the two groups of kingdoms, the
Engle and the Saxon kingdoms which occupied
Britain south of the Humber, the relations of
each member of the group to its fellow-members
seem to have been merely local; it was only
locally that East and West and South English
were being grouped at this time round the Middle
English of Leicester, or that the East and West
and South Saxons had been grouped round the
Middle Saxons about London. In neither instance
do we find any real trace of a confederacy, or of
the rule of one member of the group over the
others; while north of the Humber the feeling
between the Engle of Yorkshire and the Engle
who had settled towards the Firth of Forth was
a feeling of hostility rather than friendship. But

with the conquests of Ceawlin this age of isolation, of equality, of independence, came to an end. The progress of the conquest had in fact drawn a sharp line between the kingdoms of the conquerors. The work of half of them was done. In the south of the island not only Kent, but Sussex, Essex, and Middlesex, were surrounded by English territory, and hindered by that single fact from all further growth. In central Britain the same fate necessarily befell the East-English, the South-English, and the Middle-English. The West-Saxons, on the other hand, and the West-English or Mercians, still remained free to conquer and expand on the south of the Humber, as the Englishmen of Deira and Bernicia remained free to the north of that river. It was plain therefore that from this moment the growth and strength of these powers would throw their fellow kingdoms into the background, and that with an ever-growing inequality of power must come a new arrangement of political forces. The greater kingdoms would in the end be drawn to subject and absorb the lesser ones, and to the war between Englishman and Briton would be added a struggle between Englishman and Englishman.

It was through this struggle, and the establishment of a lordship on the part of the stronger and growing states over their weaker and stationary fellows in which it resulted, that the English kingdoms were to make their first step towards

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The West-
Saxon State.

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union in a single England; and from the time we have reached the struggle became inevitable. Masters of the larger and richer portion of the land, the invaders were no longer drawn irresistibly westward by the hope of plunder, while the severance of the British kingdoms lightened the pressure of a common danger from without. Greed and terror alike ceased to hold the invaders together, and Saxon and Engle turned from the work of conquest to fight for lordship over the land they had won. At the moment of Ceawlin's victory such a lordship seemed to fall necessarily to the lot of Wessex. No king could vie as a conqueror with the king who had fought and won at Barbury Hill, at Wimbledon, and at Deorham.¹ None of its fellow kingdoms seemed likely to hold their own against a state that stretched from the Channel to the Ouse and from the Chilterns to the mouth of the Severn. Only one success more, in fact, was needed to raise such a power into supremacy over the whole English people. A march on the upper Severn valley and the winning of Chester would utterly crush the resistance of the Britons; for it would cut off the Cumbrians

¹ At Barbury Hill Ceawlin had shared the victory with Cynric (Engl. Chron. a. 556). The victory at Bedford had been won by his brother Cuthwulf. It is this commanding position of Ceawlin that Bæda marks in setting him in the list of those who exercised an "imperium" over other Englishmen; Ælla of the South-Saxons, Ceawlin, Æthelberht of Kent, Rædwald of East-Anglia, and the Northumbrian kings, Eadwine, Oswald, and Oswiu. (Bæda, H. E. ii. c. 5.) But see *postea*, vol. ii. p. 66, *note*.

BRITAIN IN 580.

English Miles
0 20 40 60 80



CHAP. V. from the central districts of our Wales, as Deorham
 The Strife had already cut off the Welsh of Somerset, Devon,
 of the and Cornwall, and thus break what had been
 Conquerors
 577-617. Britain into three isolated districts which could
 oppose no common or national resistance to their
 assailants. But the result of such a conquest
 would be almost as decisive on the political aspect
 of the new England itself. With a border that
 stretched from the Fens round to the head-waters
 of the Trent the pressure of the West-Saxons on
 central Britain would have been irresistible. The
 scattered settlers who were dotted over Northamp-
 tonshire, the invaders who were hardly camped
 along the basin of the Trent, the peoples of the
 eastern coast from the Humber to the Thames,
 would have been powerless to resist Ceawlin's
 supremacy, while the strength of the Deirans and
 of the Bernicians was being drained at this crisis
 by a long and obstinate war which these tribes
 were waging against one another in the border-
 lands of the Wear. Neither to the south nor to
 the north of the Humber was there any state
 save Kent that could have withstood the West-
 Saxons; and, alone, even Kent could not have
 held its own.

Uriconium. We can hardly doubt that it was the sense of
 these issues that drew Ceawlin to push, in 583,
 only six years after his victory at Deorham, up
 the course of the Severn. Marching through the
 forest-belt that stretched from Arden across the

north of our Worcestershire, a belt whose fragments preserve the name of the forest of Wyre, the King reached Uriconium,¹ a town whose name we recognize in its district of the "Wrekin," and whose ruins have been recently brought to light. The town was strongly placed at the base of the Wrekin, not far from the bank of Severn, and was of great extent. Its walls inclosed a space more than double that of Roman London, while the remains of its forum, its theatre, and its amphitheatre, as well as the broad streets which contrast so strangely with the narrow alleys of other British towns,² show its wealth and importance. But with its storm by the West-Saxons the very existence of the city came to an end. Its ruins show that the place was plundered and burned, while the bones which lie scattered among them tell their tale of the flight and massacre of its inhabitants, of women and children hewn down in the streets, and wretched fugitives stifled in the hypocausts whither they had fled with their little hoards for shelter.³ A British poet

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¹ For a translation of Llywarch Hen's elegy on Kyndylan, a discussion of its historical relation to this inroad, and an identification of its "Tren" with Uriconium, see Guest, "Conquest of Severn Valley" ("Archæol. Journ." vol. xix.), pp. 199-215. For the ruins of Uriconium, see Wright, "Guide to Uriconium, 1859." On one wall were found two lines scrawled in the plaster, which would have been invaluable for a knowledge of Roman Britain. Unluckily they were destroyed, but it is noteworthy that they were in Latin. (Ibid. p. 46.)

² Wright, "Uriconium," p. 48.

³ Wright, "Uriconium," pp. 40, 41.

CHAP. V. in verses still left to us sings piteously the death-
 The Strife song of Uriconium, "the white town in the
 of the valley," the town of white stones gleaming among
 Conquerors the green woodlands. The torch of the foe had
 577-617. left it when he sang a heap of blackened ruins
 where the singer wandered through halls he had
 known in happier days, the halls of its chief
 Kyndylan, "without fire, without light, without
 song," their stillness broken only by the eagle's
 scream, the eagle "who has swallowed fresh drink,
 heart's blood of Kyndylan the fair."

Defeat of
 Faddiley.

But with the fall of Uriconium, the firing of
 Pengwyrn,¹ in its loop of the upper Severn, and
 the wreck of "Bassa's churches," perhaps a group
 of small chapels such as we still find at Glendalough,
 and which may have left their name to the little
 village of Baschurch,² the success of the West-
 Saxons reached its close. From this point the
 aim of their raid must have been Chester; but as
 Ceawlin pushed from Uriconium up the Severn
 to the head-waters of the Weaver, he was met at
 a spot called Faddiley,³ on what was possibly the
 border of the city territory, as it is still that
 of our Cheshire, by a British force which had

¹ Pengwyrn occupied the site of our Shrewsbury.

² See Ilywarch Hen's elegy, "Pengwyrn's palace: is it not
 in flames," and for Bassa, vv. 46-51. (Guest, "Origines
 Celticae," ii. 291-302.) Baschurch lies to the north of
 Shrewsbury.

³ Engl. Chron. a. 584. For the identity of its "Fethan-
 Leag" with Faddiley, see Guest, "Origines Celticae," ii. 285-
 288. It is some three miles west of Nantwich.

gathered under Broemael, a chieftain whose dominion may have roughly answered to the later Powys.¹ From the "wrath" with which Ceawlin fell back into his own country, as well as the events that followed, the battle must have ended in a terrible defeat of the Gewissas. The blow proved fatal to the power of Wessex. Not only was the upper Severn valley lost as quickly as it had been won;² but the loss was followed by a rising of those Gewissas, the Hwiccas as they were called, who had settled in the newly conquered country along the lower Severn;³ and who now took for their king Ceol or Ceolric,⁴ the son of Cutha, a brother of Ceawlin who had fallen in the rout at Faddiley.⁵

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With the rising of the Hwiccas began a struggle for the throne between the lines of Cutha and Ceawlin which broke the strength of Wessex for more than two hundred years. The first encounter

Battle of
Wan-
borough.

¹ Guest, "Origines Celtica," ii. 308.

² I am afraid I differ here from Dr. Guest and Mr. Freeman. But the point seems clear when we compare the lower with the upper valley of the Severn. Both in later days became Mercian ground. But the country of the Hwiccas retains to this day its West-Saxon dialect, while north of the Forest of Wyre the tongue is Mercian. Had this upper district been a West-Saxon settlement conquered by Mercians, I see no reason why its dialect should have differed from that of the West-Saxon lands conquered by Mercia on the lower Severn.

³ I gather this from the point at which Ceawlin takes post against the rebels, as well as from their junction with "Britons" against him. See postea.

⁴ Engl. Chron. a. 590. Malmesbury (G. R. i. sec. 17) identifies its "Ceol" with Ceolric.

⁵ Engl. Chron. c. 584, "There was Cutha slain."

WEST BRITAIN.



same scale as South Britain

Walker & Bouallac.

indeed between the two houses showed how thoroughly the kingdom was rent in twain. The revolt in the Severn valley had thrown Ceawlin back on the older Wessex; and it is there that when Ceolric marched to attack him in 591 we find the king encamped at Wanborough,¹ on the brink of the Wiltshire Downs, where their steep escarpment rears itself above the Vale of White Horse. The height was no doubt crowned with the mound or barrow from which its name is drawn, the barrow of Woden, the god from whom the kings of Wessex believed their race to spring; and its sacred character may have backed its advantages as a military position. For Wanborough was the key of Ceawlin's shrunken realm.² So long as he held the post, the old king could communicate by Roman roads with Winchester and Old Sarum; another road ran by Silchester to the regions south of Thames which he had won at Wimbledon; while reinforcements from the district of the Four Towns could reach him by the Icknield Way which ran along the edge of the downs on which he stood. It was this that made his overthrow a decisive one. After a

¹ Engl. Chron. a. 591. Guest (Welsh and English Boundaries, "Origines Celticae, ii. 243-5) fixes this "Wodnes beorge" at Wanborough. Malmesbury (G. R. i. 17) attributes the rising to the hatred felt towards Ceawlin ("quia enim in odium sui quasi classicum utrobique cecinerat"), but does not give its causes.

² Guest, Welsh and English Boundaries, "Origines Celticae," ii. 245.

CHAP. V. terrible slaughter the day went against Ceawlin;¹
 The Strife of the he was driven from his realm, and perished two
 Conquerors years after, it may be in some effort to regain
 577-617. his throne.² The battle of Wanborough marks,
 as we have seen, a new stage in the relations of
 Welshmen and Englishmen. At Faddiley the
 Britons had reappeared on the scene of our history
 as a vigorous fighting power. At Wanborough,
 it was their junction with the Hwiccas that struck
 down Ceawlin, for Britons marched side by side
 with the Hwiccas in the host of Ceolric.³ But
 the battle marks no less a new stage in the history
 of the West-Saxons. The house of Cutha, which
 this alliance had seated on the throne,⁴ had at
 once to pay the price of a policy which had
 brought the Welshmen into Wessex. After a
 few years Ceolric was succeeded by his brother
 Ceolwulf;⁵ but the reign of Ceolwulf was one
 long fight with Englishmen and Britons; and it
 was while Wessex was thus battling for very life
 that the primacy among the conquerors was

¹ Engl. Chron. a. 591. "There was great slaughter at Wanborough, and Ceawlin was driven out."

² Engl. Chron. a. 593.

³ Malmesbury (G. R. i. sec. 17), "Conspirantibus tam Anglis quam Britonibus apud Wodnesdic cæso exereitu."

⁴ It retained it till 685, when Ceawlin's line again recovered the kingdom under Cædwalla and Ine, and, after a fresh interruption, finally made it its own in Ecgbert.

⁵ Eng. Chron. a. 597. "He fought and contended incessantly with Angel-cyn, or with Walas, or with Peohtas, or with Scottas." I cannot explain the appearance here of "Picts and Scots."

suddenly seized by a rival whom she had struck down some thirty years before.

The effort of the Kentishmen to break out of their narrow bounds had been foiled by Ceawlin at Wimbledon; and their boy-king had fallen back on his petty realm only to watch the rise of his conqueror to a yet greater power over Britain. But Æthelberht had never ceased to aim at a wider sway; and his ambition may have been quickened by a marriage that linked him with one of the greatest states of the Continent. From its geographical position as well as its long peace, it was natural that Kent should be the first of the English states to renew that intercourse with the body of Western Christendom which had been broken by the conquest of the Saxon Shore. In the reign of the Emperor Justinian, at some time therefore between 527 and 565 (or shortly before Æthelberht's accession), "men of the English" had been sent with his own envoys by one of the Frankish kings of Gaul to Constantinople; and their presence at the Imperial Court was welcomed there as a proof that the island of Britain still owned the rule of the Cæsars.¹ We can hardly doubt from the date of this visit that these Englishmen were men of the Cantwara, the one English folk which was fairly settled in Britain at so early a time; while their presence in the

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Æthelberht
of Kent.

¹ Procopius, *De Bell. Goth.* iv. 20. Freeman, "Norman Conquest," i. 30.

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train of these Frankish envoys points to some recognition by the Kentishmen of the supremacy of their Frankish neighbours, whose power must have seemed overwhelming at this time to the struggling invaders of Britain. Such a connexion would at any rate explain the marriage of Æthelberht with Bertha, a daughter of the Frankish king, Charibert.¹ The marriage was in itself a significant one. If, as seems probable, it took place in the years that immediately followed the battle of Faddiley,² it may have marked the awakening of larger aims in the Kentish king as he saw the great obstacle to his ambition crumble into ruin. Nor was it less important in its results: for it not only linked the fortunes of the new England with those of the German states which were growing up upon the wreck of Roman Gaul,³ but was fated in the end to knit her again to the general fortunes of Western Christendom.

¹ Greg. Turon. Hist. Eccl. lib. iv. c. 26.

² Æthelberht's marriage lies, of course, between the battle of Wimbleton and Augustine's arrival (568-595). Bertha's father, Charibert, became king in 561, and as Bertha seems to have been born soon after her father's accession (Greg. Turon. lib. iv. c. 21), the marriage, assuming her to be about twenty when it took place, lies at about 583, or a little later. It may have followed Fethanlea in 584. Professor Stubbs (Dict. Christ. Biogr. i. 316) thinks it was probably after the death of her mother, Ingoberg, in 589. (Greg. Turon. Hist. Eccl. lib. ix. c. 26.)

³ The connexion with Frankish Gaul, however, cannot have been a very close one, for Gregory of Tours (Hist. Eccl. lib. ix. c. 26) speaks of Bertha as married by "in Cantia regis cujusdam filius," whose name he clearly did not know.

The home to which Æthelberht brought his Frankish wife was the first Teutonic town which we know to have arisen on the soil of the new England. Its conquerors had hitherto followed the bent of their race in leaving the cities they had won to ruin and to solitude, and in settling in "tun" or "thorpe" in the country about them. But by Æthelberht's day the Kentish kings had fixed one of their homes just outside the north-eastern wall of Durovernum; and some of the Cantwara had drawn into a little "byryg" or borough round the dwelling of their king. From this first Cantwara-byryg, or Canterbury, they crept forward over the site of the ruined town. How utter a wreck Durovernum had become in the century since its fall, we see by comparing the ground-plan of the Roman city with that of the city which thus sprang up on its site. Though the continued existence of its Roman walls forced the settlers to build their houses in lines that led, like those of the Roman burghers, from gate to gate, yet the line of these thoroughfares was not adjusted to that of the Roman streets, nor were the sites of the Roman houses taken from those of the later dwellings. The wreck of the Roman houses indeed is found buried so deep beneath the soil of the English Canterbury that they must have sunk into ruins long before the Cantwara found a home in Durovernum. Even then it was very gradually that the new borough crept forward

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Canterbury.

CHAP. V. from the king's "tun" over the site of its predecessor; and the dedications of its churches, marking as they do the date of the parishes in which they were raised, show that the whole area within the walls was not filled up till the days of Dunstan and Eadgar.¹

Æthel-berht's supremacy. But even the stimulus of Bertha's marriage could hardly have spurred Æthelberht to a renewal of his efforts, had not the sudden ruin of Wessex left the field open to his arms. British soil indeed there was no longer any that he could win; but about him lay English neighbours who might be forced to own his supremacy. We know nothing of the marches or battles by which the Kentish king asserted his sway; but, in the six years that followed the battle of Wanborough, Æthelberht raised Kent into one of the great powers of Britain.² Even in Wessex his power was owned as that of a neighbour whose safe-conduct was sufficient to protect men in passing through the very heart of Ceolwulf's realm.³ But elsewhere he bowed his neighbours more directly under his sway. Even the South-Saxons were not sheltered by their screen of woodland and fen from the

¹ See Faussett's "Canterbury before Domesday," *Archæol. Journ.* vol. xxxii.

² Beda (H. E. ii. 5) shows that his supremacy was established by 597.

³ Beda, H. E. ii. 2. "Adjutorio usus Ædelbereti regis convocavit (Augustinus) ad suum colloquium episcopos sive doctores proximæ Brittonum provincie . . . in confinio Hwiccorum et Occidentalium Saxonum."

grasp of the conqueror.¹ But across the Thames Æthelberht found an easier prey; and in 597 his "empire," to use Bæda's word, already spread along the eastern coast as far as to the banks of the Humber.² He was overlord of the East-Saxons, whose king was wedded to his sister Rícula.³ The East-Saxon kingdom, it must be remembered, comprised Hertfordshire and Middlesex as well as Essex itself; and London also passed under his sway with the men who had so recently won it.⁴ Northward of the Colne his supremacy extended not only over the East-Anglians under their king Rædwald, but "over all the countries of the Southern-Engle which are parted from the Engle of the North by the Humber, and by the border-lands in the neighbourhood of the Humber."⁵ His border-line thus ran along the Humber and across the great swamp of the Trent to Sherwood, across the valleys of the Derwent and the Dove by Needwood to the water-parting which formed the "march" of the

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¹ Malm. Gest. Pontif. Script. post. Bæd. l. ii. c. 2 (p. 140, Rolls).

² Bæda, H. E. i. 25. "Ad confinium usque Humberæ fluminis maximi, quo meridiani et septentrionales Anglorum populi dirimuntur, fines imperii tetenderat."

³ Bæda, H. E. ii. 3. "In quâ gente Saberct, nepos Ædelbereti ex sorore Riculâ, regnabat." Sleda was Saberct's father (Florence of Worcester, ed. Thorpe. Geneal. app. ad vol. i. 250).

⁴ Bæda, H. E. ii. 3. "Fecit rex Ædelberctus in civitate Lundonia ecclesiam."

⁵ Bæda, H. E. ii. 5. "*Cunctis* australibus eorum (Anglorum) provinciis quæ Humberæ fluvio et contiguis ei terminis sequestrantur a borealibus imperavit."

CHAP. V. Mercians, then bending round through Arden it followed the western and southern borders of Northamptonshire to the borders of the Gyrwas beside Huntingdon, and struck by the Devil's Dyke and the great woodlands to the western part of Hertfordshire, to the Thames, to Sussex, and the sea.

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English
slaves at
Rome.

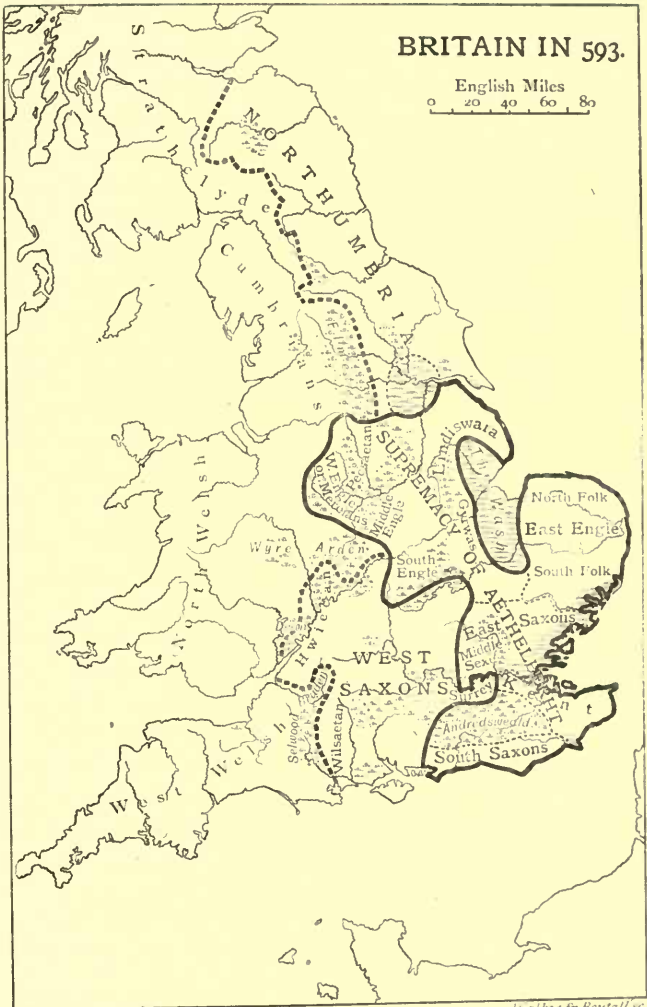
That this supremacy of Æthelberht was no mere accident, but the result of forces which were acting universally throughout the new England, is seen in the fact that the years in which it was built up saw the rise of a power hardly inferior to that of Kent on the north of the Humber. Under the rule of their king Ælla, the Engle of Deira are said not only to have made themselves masters of the country from the Humber to the Wear, but to have taken advantage of the discord in Bernicia to assert a supremacy over their fellow Engle to the north.¹ If this were so, we find the origin of a struggle between the two peoples in Ælla's old age which filled the foreign slave markets with English slaves.² Nothing marks more strongly the chasm of thought and feeling that, in spite of oneness in tongue, blood, and

¹ Skene, "Celtic Scotland," i. 155-6.

² The date of Gregory's meeting with the English slaves at Rome is fixed between 585 and 588 by the fact that after his long stay at Constantinople he returned to Rome in 585 or 586 (Pelagius wrote to him at Constantinople in October 584, while a letter of Pelagius to Elias in 586 is said to have been composed by Gregory at Rome). On the other hand, Ælla, whom the slaves owned as their king, died in 588.

BRITAIN IN 593.

English Miles
0 20 40 60 80



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religion, still parted the English tribes from one another than the cruel usages of their warfare. A war between two English peoples was carried on with all the ruthlessness of a war between strangers. It was purely at his captor's will that ransom saved the noble taken in battle from the doom of death. Slavery alone saved from death a captive of meaner rank. At a far later time than this, when the influence of Christianity had done much to soften English manners, the slaying of prisoners in cold blood or their sale in foreign slave markets remained a common matter.¹ One of the most memorable stories in our history shows us a group of such slaves, taken in this war between the Bernicians and Deirans, as they stood in the market-place at Rome, it may be the great Forum of Trajan which still in its decay recalled the glories of the Imperial City. Their white bodies, their fair faces, their golden hair, were noted by a Roman deacon who passed by.² "From what country do these slaves come?" Gregory asked the trader who brought them. The slave-dealer answered, "They are English" (or as the word ran in the Latin form it would bear at Rome),

¹ See the tale in Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 22.

² Such was his actual position in the Roman hierarchy, but Gregory was already the virtual director of the Papacy. He was, in fact, one of the seven "regionary deacons" of Rome, had been despatched by the Popes Benedict I. and Pelagius II. as their envoy for some years at the Imperial Court of Constantinople, and in a more personal capacity was Abbot of the religious house he had founded on the Cælian.

"they are Angles." The deacon's pity veiled itself in poetic humour. "Not angles but Angels," he said, "with faces so angel-like." "From what country come they?" "They come," said the merchant, "from Deira." "De ira," was the untranslatable word-play of the vivacious Roman, "ay, plucked from God's ire and called to Christ's mercy! And what is the name of their king?" They told him "Ælla;" and Gregory again seized on this word as of good omen. "Alleluia shall be sung in Ælla's land," he said, and passed on musing how the "angel-faces" should be brought to sing it.¹

While Gregory was thus playing with Ælla's name the old king passed away; and with his death in 588 the strength of Deira seems suddenly to have broken down.² As the Bernician king, Æthelric, entered Deira in triumph the children of Ælla fled over its western border, while their land passed under the lordship of its conqueror. It was from the union of the two realms which his inroad and rule brought about that a new kingdom sprang which embraced them both, the kingdom of the Northumbrians. The supremacy of Æthelric was thus of a closer and more direct sort than that of Æthelbérht; for while the Kentish king was content to rule over people who retained their own

Creation of
Northumbria.

¹ Bæda, H. E. ii. 1.

² Eng. Chron. a. 588. For the chronology of these events, see Hussey's edition of Bæda, H. E. p. 99, note.

CHAP. V. kingly stock and political unity, the king of
 The Strife Bernicia was striving to establish a direct rule
 of the over Deiran as well as Bernician, and to blend the
 Conquerors political life of both peoples into a single realm.
 577-617. Different however as the character of the two lord-
 ships might be, they were parts of the same move-
 ment towards a larger unity ; and with their rise
 the aspect of the conquered Britain was suddenly
 changed. Instead of a chaos of isolated peoples,
 its conquerors were gathered into three great
 groups, whose existence remained the key to the
 history of the country during the next two
 hundred years. The kingdom of the north had
 reached what remained its final limits from the
 Forth to the Humber. The southern kingdom
 of the West-Saxons stretched from the line of
 Watling Street to the coast of the Channel. And
 between these was already roughly sketched out
 the great kingdom of Mid-Britain, which, however
 its limits might vary in this quarter or that,
 retained a substantial identity both of character
 and of area from the days of Æthelberht to the
 final fall of the Mercian kings.

Augustine.

When Æthelfrith, on the death of Æthelric, became king of Northumbria, in 593, this three-fold division of Britain must have been fairly established ; and of its three powers that of Æthelberht was the widest and the most important. The fame of it indeed crossed the seas, and woke to fresh life the mission projects which had never

ceased to stir in the mind of Gregory from the day when he pitied the English slaves in the marketplace of Rome. Only three or four years after his converse with them in the Forum Gregory became bishop of the Imperial city,¹ and thus found himself in a position to carry out his dream of winning back Britain to the faith. The marriage of Bertha with the Kentish king, and the rule which Æthelberht had since established over a large part of the island, afforded him the opening he sought; and after cautious negotiation with the Frankish rulers of Gaul² who promised to guard his missionaries on their way, and to provide them with interpreters, Gregory sent a Roman abbot, Augustine, at the head of a band of monks to preach the Gospel to the English people. The missionaries landed in 597 on the spot where Hengest had landed more than a century before in the isle of Thanet; and the interpreters whom they had chosen among the Franks were at once sent to the king with news of their arrival, as well as with promises of things strange to his ears, of joys without end and a kingdom for ever in heaven.

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Æthelberht cannot have been taken by surprise. He had married Bertha on the condition that she should remain a Christian; her chaplain, Bishop Liudhard, formed a part of the Kentish court; and a ruined church, now known as that of St. Martin, outside the new Canterbury, had been given him

His arrival
in Kent.

¹ In 590.

² Haddan and Stubbs, "Councils," iii. 10.

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for his worship. Negotiations with Bertha and with the king himself had probably preceded the landing of Augustine ; and after a few days' delay Æthelberht crossed into Thanet to confer with the new comers. They found him sitting in the open air on the chalk down above Minster,¹ where the eye nowadays catches miles away over the marshes the dim tower of Canterbury ; and the king listened patiently to the sermon of Augustine as the interpreters whom the abbot had brought with him rendered it in the English tongue. "Your words are fair," he answered at last with English good sense ; "but they are new and of doubtful meaning." For himself, he said, he refused to forsake the gods of his fathers ; but with the usual religious tolerance of the German race he promised shelter and protection to the strangers within his own king's tun. The band of monks entered Canterbury bearing before them a silver cross with a picture of Christ, and singing in concert the strains of the litany of their Church. "Turn from this city, O Lord," they sang, "Thine anger and wrath, and turn it from Thy holy house, for we have sinned." And then in strange contrast came the jubilant cry of the older Hebrew worship—the cry which Gregory had wrested in prophetic earnestness from the name of the Yorkshire king in the Roman market-place, "Alleluia."²

¹ For fear of magic : Bæda, H. E. i. 25.

² Bæda, H. E. i. c. 25.

It was thus that the spot which witnessed the landing of Hengest became yet better known as the landing-place of Augustine. But the second landing at Ebbsfleet was in no small measure a reversal and undoing of the first. "Strangers from Rome"¹ was the title with which the missionaries first fronted the English king. The march of the monks as they chanted their solemn litany was in one sense a return of the Roman legions who withdrew at the trumpet-call of Alaric. It was to the tongue and the thought not of Gregory only but of the men whom his own Jutish fathers had slaughtered and driven over sea that Æthelberht listened in the preaching of Augustine. Canterbury, the earliest city-centre of the new England,² became the centre of Latin influence. The Roman tongue became again one of the tongues of Britain, the language of its worship, its correspondence, its literature. But more than the tongue of Rome returned with Augustine. Practically his landing renewed that union with the Western world which the landing of Hengest had all but destroyed. The new England was admitted into the older commonwealth of nations. The civilization, arts, letters, which had fled before the sword of the English conquerors returned with the Christian faith. The fabric of the Roman law

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its results.

¹ "Mittens ad Ædelberctum (Augustinus) mandavit se venisse de Româ."—Bæda, H. E. i. c. 25.

² "Dedit eis mansionem in civitate Durovernensi, quæ imperii sui totius erat metropolis."—Bæda, H. E. i. 25.

CHAP. V. indeed never took root in England, but it is
 The Strife impossible not to recognize the influence of the
 of the Roman missionaries in the fact that codes of the
 Conquerors
 577-617. customary English law began to be put into writing
 soon after their arrival.¹ Of yet greater import
 was the weight which the new faith was to exercise
 on the drift of the English towards national unity.
 It was impossible for England to become Christian
 without seeing itself organized and knit together
 into a single life by its Christian organization,
 without seeing a great national fabric of religious
 order rise up in the face of its civil disorder.

Gregory's
 plans.

As yet however these issues of the new faith
 were still distant. For some years indeed after
 the landing of the missionaries on the shores of
 Thanet, there was little to promise any extension
 of Christianity beyond the limits of Kent. After
 a short time indeed Æthelberht listened to the
 preaching of the missionaries,² and thousands of
 Kentish men crowded to baptism in the train of
 their chief.³ Augustine, who had as yet used

¹ Æthelberht's laws are the first written code we possess.
 "Qui inter cætera bona, quæ genti suæ consulendo conferebat,
 etiam decreta illi iudiciorum, juxta exempla Romanorum, cum
 consilio sapientium constituit; quæ conscripta Anglorum ser-
 mone hætenus habentur et observantur ab ea."—Bæda, H. E.
 lib. ii. c. 5.

² Bæda, H. E. i. 26. His conversion seems to have been in
 the year of Augustine's landing, 597; cf. Bæda, H. E. ii. 5.

³ Gregory, writing in 598, rejoices that at the past Christmas
 "plus quam decem millia Angli ab eodem nunciati sunt fratre
 (Augustino) et coepiscopo nostro baptizari."—Stubbs and
 Hadlan, "Councils," iii. p. 12.

Bertha's church of St. Martin for his worship,¹ now received from the king the gift of another ruined church beside the city as the seat of his bishoprick, and founded there the "Christ Church" which still remains the metropolitan church of the English Communion; while to the eastward of Canterbury rose an abbey of St. Peter and St. Paul, the patron saints of his own Rome, in which Augustine and his successors sate as abbots, and where the Kentish kings found from that time a burial-place. But if the conversion of Kent satisfied the zeal of Augustine, it was far from satisfying the larger aims of Pope Gregory. Four years after the reception of his missionaries it seemed to the Roman bishop that the time had come for widening the little church in Kent into a church of Britain; and in 601 fresh envoys from Rome brought with them a plan for the ecclesiastical organization of the whole island.² It was characteristic of the conservative temper of the Roman chancery, as well as a proof of the utter ignorance of the country which prevailed across the Channel, that the plan was drafted on the model of Britain as it had existed under the Romans, and took no count of the changes which had been wrought by its conquest. In Roman Britain, London and York had been the leading cities; and it was London and York that Gregory took as the new ecclesi-

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¹ Bæda, H. E. lib. i. c. 26.

² See the letter—as dated—in Bæda, H. E. i. 29.

CHAP. V. astical centres of the island. Augustine was to be
 The Strife Bishop of London, with twelve suffragans in the
 of the south. He was to send another bishop to York,
 Conquerors who, as soon as Northern Britain became Christian,
 577-617. was in turn to ordain twelve suffragans for himself,
 and to be of equal rank with Augustine's successors.
 Time was to modify this programme ; but its very
 existence was significant. It was plain that, if
 Britain became Christian, its conversion to the
 new faith would bring with it a new organization
 of the whole country ; and that the form which
 its religious life must assume would lead to a re-
 construction of the forms which its civil life had
 hitherto taken.

The Britons. But, urgent as was Gregory's appeal, Æthel-
 berht was slow to use his overlordship as a means
 of forcing the peoples beneath his sway to bow to
 the new faith which he and his people had em-
 braced. Even Augustine seems for the moment
 to have preferred the easier enterprise—as it
 seemed—of placing the Kentish church in con-
 nexion with the Christianity which, as he had by
 this time learned, existed in the west of Britain.
 His journey “with the aid of King Æthelberht”
 across the territory of the West-Saxons to the
 border-line of the Hwiccas,¹ and the conference

¹ Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 2. The place of conference was “in
 confinio Hwiccorum et occidentalium Saxonum.” It is gener-
 ally put at Aust Passage on the Severn ; but if these words, as
 I believe, are rightly rendered, “on the border *between* the
 Hwiccas and West-Saxons,” this is out of the question ; and

with the Welsh clergy which followed, bring us for the first time into personal contact with what remained of the British race. As yet our glimpses of the Britons since the landing of Hengest have been scant and dim; and we learn to prize even the meagre jottings in which the chronicle of the conquerors tells us of their advance over Britain, as we turn to the thick darkness which during this period overspreads the story of the British defence. How stubborn that defence had been, the very length of the struggle has told us. To tear the Saxon Shore from the grasp of its defenders was a work of fifty years; and even when the Saxon Shore was lost, when its cities had become heaps of charred ruins, when the fortresses which had so long held the pirates at bay from the Wash to the Solent were but squares of broken and desolate walls, the country at large retained its cohesion, and faced its foes as stubbornly as before. Driven as they were from their first line of defence, the Britons fell back on an inner line, whose natural features presented yet more formidable obstacles to their assailants, and the island as a whole remained untouched by the English sword. The next seventy years saw even

we must look rather to some such place as the later Malmesbury, near this border, yet still British ground. It is clear that the Hwiccas and West-Saxons were still, as in Ceawlin's day, politically distinct, and we have seen that at that time Welsh and Hwiccas were allied. If this alliance went on, the presence of Welsh clergy in this border-line is easily accounted for.

CHAP. V. the bulk of Britain reft from them. But through-
 The Strife out the long fight the British resistance remained
 of the as stubborn as ever. The conquest of Yorkshire,
 Conquerors 577-617. of the southern downs, and of the valley of the
 Thames, though they shook the province more
 roughly, failed to break it up; for in the forests
 of Wyre and of Arden the Britons held out
 doggedly against the Saxon, while the fastnesses
 of Charnwood and Sherwood held at bay the
 invaders of the Trent valley. And now that even
 Mid-Britain was gone, and that the provincials of
 the south-west had been cut off from the general
 body of their race, the Britons still faced the
 West-Saxons along the lower Severn, still held
 the Mercians at bay along the head waters of the
 Trent, while along the dark range of moors from
 Elmet to Selkirk they barred the advance of the
 Deirans and Bernicians of the north.

Their dis-
 organiza-
 tion.

But long before this point in the strife was
 reached the contest had told fatally on their
 political and social condition. In the unconquered
 part of Britain indeed the war had produced re-
 sults almost as great as in the conquered. Severed
 from connexion with the Empire or with the rest
 of Europe, broken by defeats, wasted by incessant
 forays, what remained of the province lost little
 by little even the semblance of unity. The dis-
 organization which had begun in the strife of the
 native and Romanized parties cannot but have
 widened as time went on. In the more remote

and uncivilized parts of the province west of the Yorkshire moorlands and the Severn, in what was afterwards called Cumbria or the district from the Clyde to the Dee, in the country which now answers to Wales, Devon, and Cornwall, the native party definitely got the upper hand,¹ while in Mid-Britain the Romanized cities may have retained their supremacy. But everywhere there was the same fatal tendency to faction and severance. Save at moments of utter peril no one chieftain united the native tribes under his sway; no one city or league of cities gathered the towns around it. A crowd of petty princes jostled and battled over the surface of the west; while each town isolated itself within its own district of subject country and only joined its immediate neighbours for defence on the approach of the Englishmen.

In this political chaos the old Roman civilization died slowly away. History and tradition alike represent the chiefs of the west as having sunk into utter barbarians. In the district which they ruled order and law had well-nigh disappeared in an outbreak of greed, of bloodshed, and of lust, against which a Christianity that was fast sinking into mere superstition, and that seems to have been threatened for a while by apostasy, battled in vain. A chaos, at once political and

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Augustine
and the
Britons.

¹ This is shown by the list of princes in the "Epistola" of Gildas, cc. 1-8.

CHAP. V. religious, such as this gave little chance of welcome
 The Strife to a stranger, Christian though he were, who
 of the suddenly came from the midst of the conquerors,
 Conquerors
 577-617. and under the protection of an English king, to
 claim communion with the Welsh, and to call on
 them to unite in preaching the gospel to their
 English foes. Augustine found, indeed, more
 obstacles than mere national hate. So little did
 the Roman missionaries know of the country to
 which they had been sent,¹ that it was as a sur-
 prise that they found themselves confronted by
 Christians whose usages were in some ways not
 their own, who above all celebrated Easter at a
 different season,² and who in their horror at these
 differences refused not only to eat with the Roman
 priests, but even to take their meals in the same
 house with them.³ A miracle, which Augustine
 believed himself to have wrought, failed to con-
 vince the Welsh of their errors in these matters;
 and when seven of their bishops, with monks and
 scholars from the great abbey at Bangor by the
 Dee, assembled at the place of conference, a place

¹ Augustine's successor, Laurentius, owned that he and his fellow-missionaries came to Britain without any knowledge of the island. "Dum nos sedes apostolica . . . in his occiduus partibus ad prædicandum gentibus paganis dirigeret, atque in hanc insulam, quæ Britannia nuncupatur, contigit introisse antequam cognosceremus; credentes quod juxta morem universalis ecclesiæ ingrederentur, in magna reverentiæ sanctitatis tam Brittones quam Scottos venerati sumus." (Bæda, H. E. ii. 4).

² We shall have to deal later on with these differences.

³ See Dagan's refusal, Bæda, H. E. ii. cap. 4.

which still in Bæda's day preserved its name of "Augustine's Oak," they were in no humour for hearkening to his claims on their obedience as Archbishop. The story ran that they consulted a solitary as to their course. "Let the stranger arrive first," replied the hermit; "if then he rise at your approach, hear him submissively as one meek and lowly and who has taken on him the yoke of Christ. But if he rise not at your coming, and despise you, let him also be despised of you." Augustine failed to rise: and the conference broke off with threats from the Roman missionaries that if the Britons would not join in peace with their brethren, they should be warred upon by their enemies.¹

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The conference at Augustine's Oak is memorable as the opening of a conflict between the two great branches of the Western Church, the Celtic and the Roman, which was to be fought out in many lands, but nowhere with more violence than in the new England. But to the Britons who took part in it, it had probably little religious significance. Their horror at the variance of usages, their resentment at the claims on their obedience, only gave an edge to their indignation at being called on to join in a work of conversion which of itself recognized the English as permanent masters of the soil they had won. At no moment indeed could they have been less inclined to such a

Revival of
the Britons.¹ Bæda, H. E. ii. 2.

CHAP. V. recognition; for the time at which Augustine
The Strife appeared before them was a time of national
of the revival. To Gildas, as to every man of his race,
Conquerors 577-617. the success of the invader had seemed due to the
political disorganization among the British them-
selves, to the moral disorganization which accom-
panied it, and to the absence of any common
and national resistance which followed from this
disorganization. But the very triumphs of the
English had done something to restore political
unity to the chaos which called itself Britain.
What were now left unconquered were its purely
Celtic portions, the districts along its western
coast, where the wild country and the scarcity of
towns had given the Roman tradition but little
hold, and where, even under the Roman rule, the
native chieftains had probably been suffered to
maintain much of their older sovereignty over
their clans. In the break up of national life
during the years that had passed since the
withdrawal of the imperial administration, such
chiefs had become independent lords of distinct
provinces; and their feuds and lawlessness broke
the strength of the island. In the midst of the
sixth century, Gildas paints for us a terrible
picture of the savage chieftains who parted
Damnonia and our Wales between them.¹ But
even then the growing pressure of the invaders
was making this mere chaos of jarring princes

¹ "Epistola," cc. 1-8.

impossible. The pettier British states were being forced to group themselves before the stranger. In the peninsula of the south-west, Constantine, a descendant, it may be, of Ambrosius Aurelianus, was owned as supreme. West of the Severn, Maelgwn, a prince of what we now know as North Wales, towered above his brother-rulers. The petty states from the Derwent to Dumbarton were fused together in a kingdom of Strathclyde. The consolidation gave a new vigour to the British resistance; and the rout of Ceawlin at Faddiley was but the first proof of the change. Not only were the Welsh strong enough to drive back the West-Saxons from the upper valley of the Severn, and for twenty years after to hold its eastern passes against the advance guard of the Engle who were pressing up the Trent, but they were strong enough to become aggressors in their turn, to penetrate into the heart of the country from which they had been driven half a century before, and to humble the pride of Wessex on the battle-ground of Wanborough.

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These triumphs in the south were but a few years old when Augustine came to call them to reconciliation with their foes. And at that very moment triumphs as great seemed impending in the north. From the moment of his accession to the Northumbrian throne in 593, Æthelfrith had taken up the work of conquest with a ruthless vigour. His sword became the terror of the

Britons and
Scots.

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Welsh along his whole western border, from the Yorkshire moorlands to the dykes and forests which sheltered the Britons of Clydesdale.¹ But fierce as Æthelfrith's attack was, it was only ten years after his accession that his advance in this quarter became so threatening as to unite in one vast confederacy the whole force of the countries along his border. The Welsh states of the north had united in a kingdom of Strathclyde;² and the men of Strathclyde found at this juncture allies in a neighbour race. At the close of the Roman rule over Britain, settlers from the north of Ireland (whose inhabitants then bore the name of Scots) crossed the strait of sea between Ulster and Cantyre, and founded a Scot or Irish kingdom, the kingdom of Dalriada, around the shores of Loch Linnhe. This little kingdom had rested till now in obscurity; but freeing itself gradually from the claims of overlordship put forward by the sovereigns of Ireland, and holding its own against the Piets who surrounded it on the north and the east, it started towards the close of the sixth century into a new and vigorous life. It is possible that an impulse was given to it by an Irish exile, Colom or Columba, who landed in 563 in the little isle of Hii off the Pietish coast, and founded there a religious house which was destined to be the Christian centre of northern Britain.

¹ Bæda, H. E. i. c. 34.

² Skene, "Celtic Scotland," vol. i. p. 159.

The isle lay within the dominions of the Picts, but the sympathies of Columba naturally drew him to his Irish kinsmen round Loch Linnhe, and after ten years of a prosperous rule at Hii his legend tells us that he was bidden by an angel to consecrate Aedhan, the son of Gafran, as King of Dalriada.¹

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The consecration of Aedhan in 574 set him high among his neighbour chieftains; and his success in driving the Bernicians from the district south of the head of the Firth of Forth,² which was long a debateable land between the various races that surrounded it, set him in the forefront of the struggle against their kings. The series of fights which went on in that quarter for the twenty years between 580 and 600, were the prelude to the more formidable attack of 603. In spite of his seventy years,³ Aedhan stood first in the league which formed itself in that year against Northumbria; and it was under his command that the hosts of Scots and Britons which had gathered from the whole district between the Lune and the lakes of Argyle marched upon Liddesdale. The point at which they struck was the key of Æthel-frith's kingdom; for from the vale of the Liddel one pass leads into the valley of the Teviot and the

¹ Adamnan, "Life of Columba," ed. Reeves, p. 198 and note.

² Skene, "Celtic Scotland," i. 160.

³ Tighernach places his birth in 533 (Skene, "Celtic Scotland," i. 160, note).

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Tweed, and another into that of the Tyne.¹ But this important position was guarded by the rampart of the Cattrail, which formed the boundary between Northumbria and Strathclyde; and here, at Dægsa's stone, whose name we still catch in the village of Dawston, Æthelfrith awaited his foe. The fight was a long and obstinate one; Theodbold, a brother of Æthelfrith, was slain, and the whole force he led cut to pieces. But the victory of the Northumbrians was only the more complete. The field was heaped with British dead, while of Aedhan's whole army only a few warriors succeeded in escaping with their king.² The blow dissolved the confederacy which had threatened Northumbria. The Scot power, indeed, was utterly broken; "from that day to this," Bæda cries in accents of unwonted triumph more than a hundred years later, "no Scot-king has dared to come into Britain to battle with the English folk." And while the Scots withdrew to their far-off fastnesses, the Welsh themselves lay at the conqueror's mercy. No effort indeed was made to seize their land for English settlement;³ but we cannot doubt

¹ Skene, "Celtic Scotland," i. 162.

² Bæda, H. E. i. c. 34.

³ This comes vividly out in the sites of the royal "vills." "In Bæda's day," says Mr. Hodgson Hinde ("Transac. Hist. Soc. of Lanc. and Cheshire," viii. 11), "among the numerous villas maintained for the migratory residence of the royal household, not one occurs beyond the chain of hills which separated the eastern district of the Northumbrian kingdom from the west. The reason is obvious, that even then no attempt was made to colonize the latter."

BRITAIN NORTH OF THE WASH.

Scale of Miles
0 10 20 30 40 50

British Names.... Brigantes, Bryneich
Roman Names..... EBORACUM
English Names..... Eoforwick
Modern Names..... York



CHAP. V. that the submission and tribute which we find
 The Strife of the Conquerors Strathelyde owing to later kings of Northumbria
 577-617. was the result of Æthelfrith's victory at Dægsa's
 stone.

Conversion
 of East-
 Saxons.

While Northumbria was thus widening its lordship in the north, Æthelberht was at last entering on the great experiment of Christianizing his dominion in Mid-Britain which Gregory and Augustine had urged upon him. His delay showed his sense of its risk;¹ for it was three years after Gregory's appeal, and seven years after the conversion of his own kingdom, before Æthelberht ventured on pushing the new faith across its borders. In 604 Augustine set Justus as bishop in the "Rochester" which had risen on the ruins of Durobrevis,² over all the Kentish kingdom west of the Medway. The diocese may mark a dependent realm of West-Kent, whose relation to the common Kentish king would be reflected in the subordination of this see to the mother-see at Canterbury; as the memory of the house of St. Andrew on the Cælian from which the first English missionary had come was preserved in the dedication to St. Andrew of the church which Æthelberht founded and endowed at Rochester. But

¹ Gregory's letter is dated 601; Æthelberht's first effort to carry it out was in 604.

² "Justum vero in ipsâ Cantîâ Augustinus episcopum ordinavit in civitate Durobreui, quam gens Anglorum a primario quondam illius, qui dicebatur Hrof, Hrofascæstre agnominat" (Beda, H. E. ii. 3).

his next step was a more important one. Of all his dependent kingdoms Essex was most closely linked to the Kentish king. His sister Ricula had been wedded to the East-Saxon king, Sleda; and their son, Æthelberht's nephew, Sæberht, was now ruling as an under-king over that people.¹ The little kingdom had been raised into consequence by its conquest of London in Æthelberht's boyhood: for if the city had been for a while laid waste the natural advantages of its position soon began to draw commerce and inhabitants once more to its site; and in the early years of the seventh century it was already a dwelling-place of Englishmen.² In 604 Mellitus was sent as bishop to preach to the East-Saxons;³ and so complete seemed the success of his preaching in the conversion of Sæberht and his folk that Æthelberht began the building of a church of St. Paul as the bishop's-stool of the new diocese in London itself.⁴ His act—for there is no mention even of Sæberht's

¹ Bæda, H. E. ii. 3. "Regnabat, quamvis sub potestate positus Ædelbereti."

² "Orientalium Saxonum . . . quorum metropolis Landonia civitas est, super ripam præfati fluminis posita, et ipsa multorum emporium populorum terra marique venientium." From the "est" and "metropolis" I take the latter words of Bæda (H. E. ii. 3) to refer, not to Æthelberht's day, but to his own in the eighth century, when the city was the "mother-city" of the East-Saxon diocese.

³ Bæda (H. E. ii. 3) says that in 604 Mellitus was sent "ad prædicandum" in Essex, and that, when the province at his preaching received the word, Æthelberht built the church of St. Paul in London. The building was thus after 604, but probably soon after.

⁴ Bæda, H. E. ii. 3.

CHAP. V. co-operation—marks how direct was his rule over
 The Strife the East-Saxon realm. But the site of the new
 of the church is hardly less significant. Though settlers
 Conquerors were again re-peopling London, the western
 577-617. extremity of the Roman city can still have been
 but a waste in 604; for not only could the new
 church be placed there, but its precincts embraced
 even to the middle ages a large district around it,
 which stretched almost from the river to Newgate,
 and from near the wall as far inland as Cheapside.

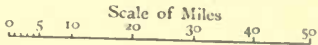
Rædwald of
 East-Anglia.

The conversion of the East-Saxons, and the
 success of the first step in that general attack on
 English heathendom which he had so vigorously
 urged on Æthelberht, must have been among the
 last news which reached Gregory the Great ere he
 died in 606. His death was soon followed by that
 of Augustine himself, whose body was laid beside
 the walls of his church of St. Peter and St. Paul,
 which was now rising to completion.¹ But the
 death of Gregory was only the prelude to a fresh
 step forward in the realization of his plans.
 Rædwald, the king of the East-Anglians, was
 summoned to Æthelberht's court; and the pressure
 of his over-lord sufficed to induce him to receive
 baptism as a Christian.² But on his return home

¹ Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 3.

² Bæda (H. E. ii. 15) gives no date for Rædwald's baptism, his subsequent apostasy, or his after rise to independence. But the first must have been after the conversion of Essex in 604, and the last was some while before Æthelberht's death in 616 (Bæda, H. E. ii. 5). (See postea, p. 270, note 2.) The

EAST BRITAIN.



British Names Iceni
Roman Names LINDUM
English Names Bedicanford
Modern Names Lincoln



CHAP. V. he found no will among the East-Anglians to accept
 The Strife of the Conquerors the new faith; and their reluctance was backed
 577-617. by the opposition of his wife.¹ Rædwald strove
 to satisfy the conflicting will of his over-lord and
 his own people by a characteristic compromise.
 He retained the older gods, but he placed the new
 Christ among them, and set a Christian altar
 in the temples beside the altar of the deities of
 his race.²

Rædwald's
 supremacy.

That such a compromise would content
 Æthelberht was little likely; and we can hardly
 fail to connect the strife which must have arisen
 over this rejection of the religion of Kent with the
 next incident in the history of East Anglia. It
 was "while Æthelberht was still living" that
 Rædwald took his place as over-lord in Mid-
 Britain.³ Religion indeed may have furnished
 only a pretext for the rising of the East-Anglians.

baptism was "in Cantia" (H. E. ii. 15); the apostasy,
 "rediens domum."

¹ "Rediens domum, ab uxore suâ et quibusdam perversis
 doctoribus seductus est."—Bæda, H. E. ii. 15.

² "Ita ut, in morem antiquorum Samaritanorum, et Christo
 servire videretur et diis quibus antea serviebat; atque in eodem
 fano et altare haberet ad sacrificium Christi, et arulam ad
 victimas demoniorum."—Bæda, H. E. ii. 15. What is odder
 is that this temple with its two altars lasted almost to Bæda's
 day. "Quod fanum rex ejusdem provincie Aldwulf, qui
 nostrâ ætate fuit, usque ad suum tempus perdurasse, et se in
 pueritia vidisse testabatur."

³ After describing Æthelberht's "imperium" over the
 English states south of Humber, and stating that Æthelberht
 was the third who "imperium hujusmodi obtinuit," Bæda says,
 "quartus, Rædwald, rex Orientalium Anglorum, qui etiam
 vivente Ædilbercto eadem suæ genti ducatum præbebat" (H. E.
 ii. 5).

At this moment they formed the strongest, as they were the most clearly defined, of the central tribes between the Humber and the Thames. From the rest of the island their land was almost entirely cut off by the fens that bordered it on the north, and bent round to join the great forest belt which stretched along its western border, while the broad estuary of the Stour parted it from Essex on the south. The easy access to its shores from the German coast had probably aided in giving a specially Teutonic character to its population; and the recent gathering of its conquering tribes under a single king furnished a stock of warlike energy which found an outlet in the subjection of their neighbours. It was, we can hardly doubt, from a recognition of their superior strength, that, while the East-Saxons still clung to the Kentish king,¹ the rest of his subject peoples threw off his supremacy, and accepted in its place the supremacy of Rædwald. Of the incidents of this great revolution we are told nothing. But revolution as it was, it marked how permanent the threefold division of Britain had now become. If Mid-Britain threw off the supremacy of Kent, its states none the less remained a political aggregate; and their fresh union under the king of East Anglia was only a prelude to their final and lasting union under the lordship of Mercia.

¹ I conclude this from Mellitus remaining at London till Æthelberht's death (Beda, H. E. ii. 5).

CHAP. V.
 The Strife
 of the
 Conquerors
 577-617.
 Æthelfrith.

That the revolution which set Rædwald of East Anglia over the tribes of Mid-Britain was wrought with so little change save the isolation of Kent and of Essex was probably due to the fact that both the great powers of the south and of the north were too busied at the time with troubles of their own to meddle in those of their neighbours. In Wessex Ceolwulf was still carrying on the long strife of his reign, and battling "incessantly against Angles or Welsh."¹ To the civil struggles within his realm were added attacks from without. In 607 we find him fighting on the south-eastern border of his kingdom against the South-Saxons;² and when he was succeeded by his nephew Cynegils, the grandson of Cutha, in 611,³ the accession of the young king was followed by an inroad of the Britons which carried them into the heart of the realm. In 614 Cynegils fought at Bampton in Oxfordshire against the Welshmen, and the importance of the battle was shown by the fall of two thousand Britons on the field.⁴ How vigorous the temper of the Welsh continued to be is clear from the fact that this inroad of the southern

¹ Engl. Chron. a. 597.

² Engl. Chron. a. 607. This loss of Sussex may mark the date of the break up of Æthelberht's supremacy.

³ Engl. Chron. a. 611.

⁴ Engl. Chron. a. 614. "This year Cynegils and Cwihelm fought at Beandun, and slew three thousand and sixty-five Welshmen." Beandun is supposed to be Bampton in Oxfordshire. If so, the raid was on the valley of the Cherwell, and the Welsh may have struck over the Cotswolds by Cirencester. They may have been in league, as before, with the Hwiccas.

Britons into Wessex followed one of the most terrible overthrows which the Britons of the north had as yet received. Since his victory at Dægsa's Stan in 603 the energies of Æthelfrith seem to have been spent in coping with the disaffection of Deira. The spirit of national independence was quickened afresh among the Deirans as the heirs of their kingly stock grew to manhood, and the presence of these heirs on his border became a danger which called Æthelfrith to action. On the fall of Deira the house of Ælla had found a refuge, it is said, among their British neighbours; and at this time—if we accept Welsh tradition—they were sheltered by the king of Gwynedd, a district which then embraced the bulk of the present North Wales,¹ and through its outlier of Elmet pushed forward into the heart of southern Deira. The danger of a league between the Deirans and the Welsh was one which Æthelfrith could not overlook; and it was to meet this danger that he broke in 613 through the barrier that had so long held the Engle of the north at bay.

Though the deep indent in the Yorkshire shire-

¹ We shall return afterwards to these sons of Ælla. All we know from English sources is that in 614—a year later—Hereric (Ælla's grandson) and his family "exularet sub rege Brittonum Cerdice" (Bæda, H. E. iv. 23), and with him may have been Ælla's son Eadwine. But who was this "king Cerdic of the Britons"? Hussey (note to Bæda, p. 225) makes him a king "in Elmet"; Geoffry of Monmouth places him between Maelgwn and Cadvan or Cadwalla as king of Gwynedd. I have attempted to reconcile these accounts in the text.

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577-617.
Battle of
Chester.

line to the west proves how vigorously the Deirans had pushed up the river-valleys into the moors, it shows that they had been arrested by the pass at the head of Ribblesdale; while further to the south the Roman road that crossed the moors from York to Manchester was blocked by the unconquered fastnesses of Elmet, which reached away to the yet more difficult fastnesses of the Peak. But the line of defence was broken as the forces of Æthelfrith pushed over the moors along Ribblesdale into our southern Lancashire. His march was upon Chester, the capital of Gwynedd, and probably the refuge-place of Eadwine. From the first the position of Chester had marked it out as of military and political importance. Once masters of Central Britain, the Romans had sought for a military post from which a legion could watch alike the wild tribes of our Lancashire and Lake district, and the yet wilder tribes of the present North Wales. They found such a position at a point where the Dee, after flowing in a direct course from the south, bends suddenly westward and slants thence to its estuary in the Irish Sea. Just at this turn to the west a rise of red sandstone which abutted on the river along its northern bank offered a site for a town; and it was on this site that the Roman camp was established which grew as men gathered round it into the city of Deva, whose other name of *Castrum Legionum* has come down to us in the form of Chester. The form of

Deva recalled its military origin. The town was in fact a rough square of houses through which the road from Cumbria, entering by the north gate, struck to the bridge across the Dee on the south, while in the very centre of the place the line of this road was crossed at right-angles by the road from Central Britain to Wales, the famous Watling Street, which came over the low watershed of the Trent and entered the city by its eastern gate. Deva, therefore, not only held the passage over the Dee, but commanded the line of communication from Central Britain to both the north-west and the west ; and so important a post was naturally guarded by fortifications of no common order. The river, indeed, which after passing the city makes a fresh bend to the north, furnished a natural line of defence on the south and the west of the town, for a thin strip of marsh which filled the lower ground between the bridge and the gate that led to it widened on the west into a broad morass which is now represented by the meadows of the Rood-eye.¹ On the east and the north, where no such natural barrier presented itself, the site of the town was cut off from the general level of the sandstone rise by a trench hewn deeply in the soft red rock, over which still tower the massive walls which, patched and changed as they have been in later days, are still mainly the work of Rome. At the news of the

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577-617.

¹ See Mr. Freeman's map, *Norman Conquest*, iv. 311.

CHAP. V.
 The Strife
 of the
 Conquerors
 577-617.

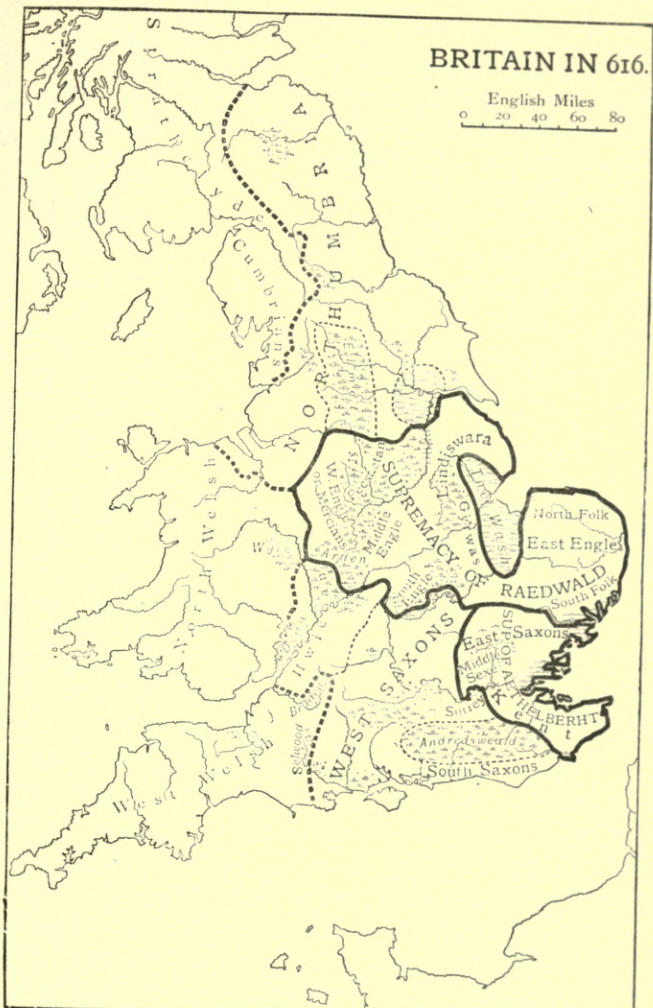
danger of Chester, Brocmael, the Prince of Powys, marched anew from his home at Pengwyrn, the after Shrewsbury, to rescue the city from the Northumbrians, as he had rescued it, only twenty years before, from the West-Saxons. But the terror of a coming doom had fallen on the Britons. Two thousand monks dwelt some miles from the city in one of those vast religious settlements which characterized Celtic Christianity, and after a three days' fast a thousand of these made their way to the field to pray for their countrymen. Æthelfrith watched the wild gestures of the monks as they stood apart from the host with arms outstretched in prayer, and bade his men slay them in the coming fight. "Bear they arms or no," said the king, "they fight against us when they cry against us to their God." Abandoned by Brocmael, who fled before the English onset, the monks were the first to fall; but the heavy loss sustained by the Northumbrian army proved the stubbornness of the British resistance.¹ All however was in vain, and the victory of Æthelfrith was followed by the fall of Chester; while the district over which the wasted city had ruled, a district which seems to have stretched from Nantwich as far as the Mersey, or perhaps the Ribble, fell with the city itself into the hands of the Northumbrians.

The battle of Chester marked a fresh step for-

¹ Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 2.

BRITAIN IN 616.

English Miles
0 20 40 60 80



CHAP. V. ward in the struggle with the Welsh. By their
The Strife victory at Deorham the West-Saxons had cut off
of the the Britons of Dyvnaint, of our Dorset, Somerset,
Conquerors the Britons of Devon, and Cornwall, from the general body of
577-617. their race. What remained was broken anew
Its results. into two parts by the battle of Chester; for the
conquest of Æthelfrith had parted the Britons of
what we now call Wales from the Britons of
Cumbria and Strathclyde. From this moment
therefore Britain as a country ceased to exist.
No general resistance of the Welsh people was
henceforth possible, and the warfare of Briton
against Englishman died down into a warfare of
separate English kingdoms against separate British
kingdoms, of Northumbria against the Cumbrians
and Strathclyde, of Mercia against the Welsh be-
tween Anglesea and the British Channel, of Wessex
against the tract which stretches from Mendip to
the Land's End. Nor was the victory of less
importance to England itself. With it the
Northumbrian kingdom was drawn from its
isolated existence beyond the Humber. Even
had no dynastic interests forced Æthelfrith, as
they were soon to force him, into conflict with his
fellow-Englishmen in the south, the very fact that
he was brought into actual contact with them
would have made new relations inevitable. Till
now the estuary of the Humber and the huge
swamp that stretched from it to the fastnesses of
Elmet had served as an effectual barrier between

Scale of Miles



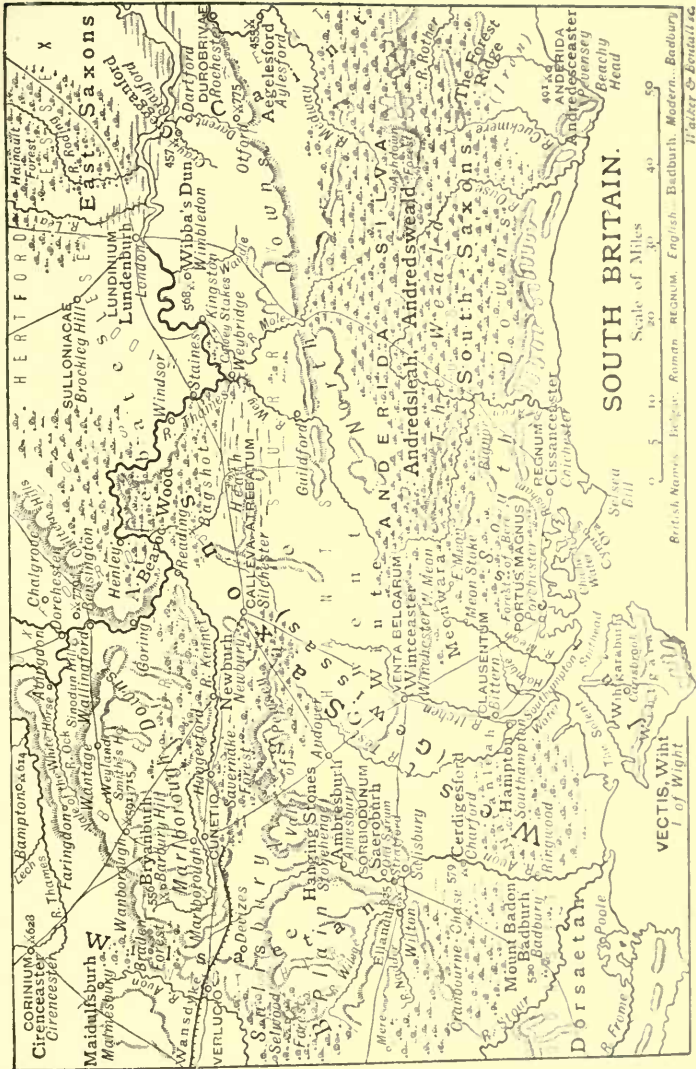
CHAP. V. Northumbria and Mid-Britain. But this barrier
 The Strife was turned when the capture of Chester and of its
 of the district brought the Northumbrians to the west of
 Conquerors what had till now been the "English March."
 577-617.

The low rise which forms the watershed between the basins of the Trent and the Severn was a far different barrier from the Humber and the Fen ; it is so insignificant indeed that to one who looks from the heights of Cranborne Chase the great central plain through which the Trent rolls its waters seems to bend without a break from Yorkshire round the blue mountains of the Peak through the plains of Cheshire to the sea. That the Britons had held such a border so long against the Mercians shows the stubbornness of their defence as well perhaps as the weakness of these "West-English" assailants ; but it could form no lasting or effective barrier between Mid-Britain and the great Northern kingdom which thus found itself on its flank.

Fall of
 Kent.

Fresh indeed from the glory of his victory at Chester, Æthelfrith could not fail to wake to new dreams of ambition as he looked to the south. Wessex seemed weaker than ever. A new king, Cynegils, had mounted its throne on Ceolwulf's death in 611,¹ but the strife within and without went on without a check, and in the very year after the fall of Chester, in 614, a Welsh army, as we have seen, in union perhaps as before with the Hwiccas, succeeded in penetrating into the heart

¹ Engl. Chron. a. 611.



British Names. Latin. Roman. English. Modern. Badbury. Modern. Badbury. li' aliter & Bentall etc

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of the West-Saxon realm. They were defeated indeed at Bampton near the Thames valley with a great slaughter, but their inroad showed that if the Britons were no match for Northumbria they were still strong enough and bold enough to form a match for the West-Saxons. The power, too, that had risen on the ruin of Wessex had as suddenly collapsed. The supremacy which but a few years before Kent had wielded over all Mid-Britain between Watling Street and the Humber, had shrivelled in the later days of Æthelberht into a supremacy over the East-Saxons alone. And at Æthelberht's death in 616¹ even this fragment of its older empire was lost. Sæberht died in the same year as his over-lord, and the sons of King Sæberht threw off their father's faith. The two young kings burst into the church at London where Bishop Mellitus was saying mass. "Why don't you give us that white bread which you gave to our father Saba?" they cried. The bishop bade them first be baptized; but they refused to enter the font. "We have no need of that," they answered, "but we want to refresh ourselves with that bread;" and a renewed offer of baptism was met with a sulky bidding to begone from their land, since he would not hearken to them in so small a matter.² The rejection of the new faith was a sign that the East-Saxons had thrown off their

¹ Engl. Chron. a. 616; Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 5.

² Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 5.

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subjection to the power which had thrust Christianity on them. But that power itself seemed bent on throwing off the new faith, for when Mellitus crossed the Thames he found even Kent in the throes of a religious reaction. Æthelberht's son Eadbald declared himself a heathen, and in the old heathen fashion took his father's wife for his own. In spite of its twenty years' continuance in the land the new faith had little hold on the Kentishmen; and they followed Eadbald to the altar of Woden as they had followed Æthelberht to the altar of Christ. Mellitus with Bishop Justus of Rochester fled over to Gaul, while Laurentius of Canterbury, who was proposing to follow them, spent the eve of his departure in the church of St. Peter and St. Paul.¹ A dream, however, in which the first appeared to him, and scourged him for his cowardice, drove him in the morning to a fresh remonstrance with the king. The marks of the scourge and the wondrous tale told by Laurentius did their work. Eadbald "feared much," and the fear was strong enough to again overturn the worship of Woden and restore throughout Kent the worship of Christ.

But isolated as it had become, and torn as it must have been with this religious strife, Kent ceased to be of weight in English politics. Its power over Mid-Britain had passed, as we have seen, to East Anglia; and it was along the bounds

Eadwine.

¹ Beda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 6.

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of Rædwald's over-lordship that the borders of the Northumbrian kingdom now stretched from the Humber to the head-waters of the Trent. A collision would have been inevitable in any case; but it was hastened by the jealousy with which Æthelfrith followed the movements of the house of Ælla.¹ Of Ælla's children, the elder had died in exile; and his son Hereric, while sheltered at the court of the British king, Cerdic, after the battle of Chester, was removed by poison in 615.² But a second child of Ælla's still remained. Eadwine had been but a boy of three years old when his house was driven into exile; and it was only at Hereric's death that he became the representative of the kingly stock of Deira. While his

¹ On the invasion of Deira by Æthelric in 589 two sons of Ælla had fled from their fatherland into exile. One of these, whose name is lost, must have already reached manhood, for in the early years of his exile he became the father of Hereric, whose name has been preserved to us through the sanctity of his child, Hild. As we hear no more of him, this elder son must have died in those years of wandering. His son Hereric, with his wife Bregeswid and their two children, Hereswid, who afterwards married Æthelhere (Bæda, H. E. iv. 23), king of East Anglia, and the more celebrated Hild, who founded the house of Whitby, was, in Hild's infancy (and she was born in 614), "in exile with Cerdic, a king of the Britons," and was then poisoned. Eadwine, Ælla's other son, must have been much younger than his unnamed brother; he can in fact have been little older than his nephew Hereric, for he was but twenty-eight when Hereric, already a father of two children, was murdered. (Bæda, H. E. iv. 23; Flor. Worc. ed. Thorpe, vol. i. 268.) It is noteworthy that one daughter of Ælla, Acha, who remained in Deira, became Æthelfrith's wife; a marriage clearly intended to reconcile the Deirans to his rule.

² "Cum vir ejus Hereric exularet sub rege Britonum Cerdice, ubi et veneno periit."—Bæda, H. E. iv. 23.

brother's line found shelter among the Welsh, he seems to have sought refuge among the wild fastnesses over the Mercian border¹ with Cearl, who was at that time king of the Mercians. Cearl gave the fugitive his daughter Quænborg to wife; and two boys were born of this marriage.² But even from Mercia Eadwine was at last driven, doubtless by the pressure of his Northumbrian rival; and in 617 he appeared at the court of the East Angles, where Rædwald gave him welcome and promises of security.

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The welcome and pledge showed perhaps that the East-Anglian king believed war with the Northumbrians to be inevitable. Eadwine's presence indeed at his court was no sooner announced in the north than three embassies from Æthelfrith followed in quick succession, each offering gold for Eadwine's murder, or threatening war if his life was spared.³ In spite of his pledges, greed and the fear of war seemed to shake the resolve of Ræd-

Eadwine
and
Rædwald.

¹ "Cum persequente illum Ædilfrido per diversa occultus loca vel regna multo annorum tempore profugus vagaretur, tandem venit ad Rædwaldum."—Bæda, H. E. ii. 12.

² "Osfrid et Eadfrid, filii regis Ædwini, qui ambo ei exuli nati sunt de Quænborgâ, filiâ Cearli regis Merciorum."—Bæda, H. E. ii. 14. The boys were born therefore before 617, when Eadwine's "exile" ceased, and in 633 Osfrid was old enough to have a son, Yffi, who was carried off to Kent with the children of Eadwine (Bæda, H. E. ii. 20). But as Osfrid is called "bellicosus juvenis" when he fell at Hæthfield in 633, he may well have been some eighteen years old, which would bring his birth and Quænborg's marriage to the period just after the battle of Chester.

³ Bæda, H. E. ii. 12.

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wald; and he promised the envoys either to slay the Ælling, or to give him into their hands. It was at sunset that a friend of the exile who had learned the king's will called Eadwine from his sleeping chamber to warn him of the danger and offer him guidance to a fresh lurking place. The noble temper of one who was destined to greatness breathed in the exile's answer. "I cannot do this thing," he said, "I cannot be the first to treat the pledge which I have received from so great a king as a thing of nought, and that when he has done me no wrong, nor showed me enmity. Better, if I am to die," he ended, in words that told of the weariness of a life of wandering: "better Rædwald should slay me than some meaner man!" The silence of the night gathered round Eadwine as he sat where his friend had left him on the stone bench at the door of the king's court. Suddenly a man drew near in the dusk, and asked him why at that hour, when others slept, he alone kept watch through the night. The look and dress of the man were foreign and strange to him; as we shall see hereafter, they were probably those of a Roman priest, Paulinus, who had come northwards from Kent, and may now have been in secret communication with Rædwald's queen. The king had revealed to his wife his purpose of betrayal, but her vehement remonstrances had again changed his mood, and he had pledged himself afresh to defend the exile. The keen-witted

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Italian knew how to make market of the news he had learned. Heedless of the first haughty repulse of his greeting, he asked Eadwine what meed he would give to one who would free him from his cares, what meed to one who promised that he should live to surpass in power every English king that had gone before him? The thunderstruck exile promised a meed worthy such tidings. "And what," went on the stranger, "if he who foretold this could show thee better rede for life and soul than any of thy kin ever heard! wouldst thou hearken to his rede?" Eadwine gave his pledge; and setting his hand on the exile's head with a bidding that with this sign he would hereafter claim the promise, the stranger vanished so rapidly in the dusk that Eadwine held his voice to have been the voice of a spirit.

Battle of
the Idle.

It is possible that the king's wavering and negotiation had been little more than a blind to deceive Æthelfrith while the East-English were gathering to attack him; for the refusal to surrender Eadwine was at once followed by the march of Rædwald's army to the Mercian border. The sudden attack took Æthelfrith by surprise. He seems to have been backing his threats by an advance with a small force through the tangled country along the fen which covered the valley of the lower Trent; for it was here that Rædwald's army attacked him as it emerged from the marshes on the banks of the Idle. The encounter was a

CHAP. V. memorable one. If Wimbledon was the first re-
 The Strife corded fight between the peoples of the conquerors,
 of the the fight between Rædwald and Æthelfrith was
 Conquerors the first combat between the great powers who had
 577-617. now grouped these peoples about them. But we
 know nothing of the battle itself. It ended in a
 victory of the East-Anglian king; but only a
 snatch of northern song—"Foul ran Idle with the
 blood of Englishmen"—has preserved the memory
 of the day when the little stream of Idle saw
 Æthelfrith's defeat and fall.¹

¹ Engl. Chron. (Peterborough) 617. Bæda, H. E. lib. ii. c. 12. Bæda marks the spot as "in finibus gentis Merciorum (*i.e.* of the Mercia of his own day), ad orientalem plagam amnis qui vocatur Iðlæ." Huntingdon, Hist. Angl. (Arnold), p. 56, gives the proverb, "unde dicitur, amnis Idle Anglorum sanguine sorduit."

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